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A Modern Patrician

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DEDICATION TO MY FATHER.

Whose love and care made my childhood a summer day, whose beautiful life became the inspiration of my girlhood ideals, and whose memory is now the most precious treasure I possess.

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A MODERN PATRICIAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE STEWARTS.

A STRETCH of meadow-land, bathed in sunlight, lay to the east; off to the south rose a cluster of baby hills; westward extended a belt of woodland whose serried wall of green seemed to challenge any violation of the sylvan shade. Up from the meadow came the lazy tinkling of a cow-bell. A warm south breeze wafted the fragrant odor from a freshly-mown clover field not far away; and all the air was musical with the hum of busy insects and the twittering of birds.

Countless were the pastorals hidden away here in Nature's heart, yet how few of the men and women going to and fro in their daily toil were aware of them. What strange perversity! Nature's own children, nurtured at her breast, lulled to sleep by her sweet music and fanned so lovingly by her gentle breath, yet passing on through life with eyes that see not and unhearing ears.

In one, however, a young girl stretched in grateful shade, there drinking deep of the loveliness around her, Nature found a sweet interpreter of her

various language. Her rounded elbows pressed the mossy earth, her dimpled chin rested in one glowing palm, the other hand lay hidden in her thick, brown hair; and in her eyes there was that veiled and yet far-seeing look that painters sigh to catch.

Suddenly a deep, hoarse resounding note smote upon the quiet; the noon hour was at hand. The girl started slightly at the rude awakening from her day-dreams.

Soon from a corn field at her right came the tall, well-knit figures of two farmers. She watched them as they walked up the gravel-path leading to the farmhouse. The one was a man of fifty or more, the other much younger. But her eyes rested for a moment upon the elder of the two and there was deep admiration in the glance. Whenever the girl looked upon her father's strong, yet kindly face, and noted, too, his gentle dignity of presence, she felt instinctively how far he surpassed that type of farmers with which she came in daily contact.

Wayland Stewart turned and met his daughter's earnest eyes.

"Pearl," he called, "Janet does not like to wait dinner; come in, dear!"

With a little, wistful sigh she sprang to her feet; then ran across the grass to the door.

Wayland Stewart was born and reared on a New England farm. As a boy he worked hard, for Nature gives grudgingly in the land of the Pilgrims; but he loved the life. His strong, young lungs

drank in eagerly the healthful draughts of his native air. His mind developed with equal vigor and that God-given term—man—found true realization in him.

Save his father he claimed neither a very temperate nor vigorous ancestry whose inherited virtues might have aided in giving him a fair start in life; his two brothers brought up under the same roof with himself were wild, wayward fellows in their youth and exhibited even a more depraved manhood. But Wayland Stewart was not a slave to circumstances, but the master of them; not the tool of inexorable fate, but the architect of his own destiny. He early found within his own being characteristics of which he felt he alone was the creator.

His father, for years an elder in the village church and accustomed to exhort the inhabitants of the little hamlet as long as many of them could remember, cherished the wish of seeing one day a son of his a regularly ordained preacher of the Word. His hopes were early shipwrecked in regard to his two older sons and he therefore clung the more tenaciously to the possibility of their fulfillment in his youngest child. It never once occurred to the elder that a man's true vocation is the going out of his whole spiritual and intellectual nature toward one supreme goal.

But Wayland Stewart realized this great truth and had the courage to stand by his convictions. He deeply deplored the fact, however, that in so

doing he must give a sad blow to his father's hopes; but he was persuaded that the Almighty could do better with his few chosen ones than with millions of uncalled.

Much to the chagrin, then, of the old man, the son refused to concur in his father's plans for him; instead he set his face resolutely toward the plow, for he felt that husbandry was no whit less noble in its purposes and results than the ministry, and that man alone could debase such endeavor.

"Wayland," the elder said solemnly, after receiving his son's ultimatum, "you have crushed my dearest hopes!" And the son's reply had been given with characteristic firmness:

"It seems to me, father, that your wishes should have very little weight in so momentous a question as my life's work. If the Lord had desired me for the ministry, I have not lived so far away from Him that I could not hear His message to me." So Wayland Stewart turned eagerly to his chosen work and because he loved it he succeeded in his undertaking.

In a few years he felt amply able to have a home of his own and he chose, to share it with him, a sweet, sensible, village girl. She had just finished her seminary course, and though stirred by ardent hopes and filled with noble aspirations, Katherine Fowler did not feel that their realization would be out of the question should she become a farmer's wife.

Katherine and her sister Fanny were orphans and for years they had made their home with their bachelor uncle, Hiram Littleton. He was well pleased at Katherine's marriage with the young farmer, gave her his blessing, and by way of more substantial evidence of his appreciation of his favorite niece, a gift of one thousand dollars.

Elder Stewart had died a year before and the young man no longer felt it a duty to remain in his native town. So after the marriage the young people with their combined worldly possessions and with the natural gifts of fine constitutions and good brains, went to Ohio, bought a farm and began married life.

The two were industrious and economical and the young husband added to these virtues, on his own account, a good share of commercial cleverness. In time he became one of the wealthiest farmers throughout the region.

Wayland Stewart and his wife never for an instant cast aside the refinements of domestic life which they brought with them from their Eastern home. They became promoters of a system of social and æsthetic life which, though but seldom imitated, was always secretly admired, and the customary boorishness of farm-life never obtruded itself at Clover Farm.

One child—a daughter—came to bless the home. They named her Pearl, as a reminder, perhaps, of the infinite preciousness of their gift, and she grew

up a perfect type of true American girlhood. She was independent in thought, though always considerate of the feelings of others. She was impulsive by nature, perhaps, yet willing to be guided by maturer judgment than her own. Indeed, she was a harmony, not of like, but of diverse elements, which combination is ever the producer of the broad-minded and charitable.

When the girl was fifteen her mother died. It was the first great shadow to fall across her young life, but she bore it nobly, and in the five years that had elapsed since then she had done her best to fill the vacant place.

At present the little household was augmented by a stepson of Wayland Stewart's only sister—Phillip Vail. The young man had come for the double purpose of regaining lost health and of earning sufficient money to complete his medical studies.

The family at Clover Farm were, take it all in all, a very happy one, perhaps the happiest in Cloverdale, and culture, unselfishness and a competency had made it so.

CHAPTER II.

BEECHDALE.

EECHDALE is an aristocratic suburb of Leyton. Thirty years before, some of the prosperous citizens of that city bought, for a mere song, large tracts of land, lying then outside the corporation line, and there they built for themselves handsome and commodious homes. Removed thus from the turmoil of an ambitious commercial centre, Beechdale became in time, as a consequence of its very isolation, a well-known and most conservative rural settlement.

Its wide, unrailed streets which had never yet echoed to the distracting noise of traffic, were shaded by rows of stately elm and beech trees that met and mingled their gracious shade far down the long and imposing avenues. The broad and gently-sloping lawns, whose green was but seldom dotted by shrub or flower, seemed in harmony with the majestic beauty and undisturbed tranquility of the place. Here and there, high up upon some knoll, arose the palatial residences of the Beechdale aristocracy.

The outskirts of these exclusive domains had, however, during the last few years, been invaded

by a slightly different social element, but strange to say, the intruders never seemed to comprehend the incongruity of their position. Doubtless they had never even, for a moment, questioned the propriety of taking up their abode within the sacred precincts of Beechdale. Notwithstanding, however, some pretty strong denunciatory remarks concerning such presumption, the newcomers maintained their ground, and the good people of Beechdale were obliged to undergo the humiliating ordeal of seeing portions of their fair slopes colonized by those outside the pale of high social rank. The disastrous result was that although an opportunity was afforded for those in moderate circumstances to enjoy the quiet of rural life a lowering of Beechdale society was imminent.

Beechdale realized the hopelessness of materially altering the present unfortunate condition of affairs, but she could and did most effectually show the plebeian influx that, though admitted within her princely confines, there was, unseen, a veritable Chinese wall of social prejudice and inherited pride that could not be broken down nor scaled. Entrance here could be effected only after a most rigorous investigation regarding the applicant's previous rank in society, his financial standing and (provident regard for the future reputation of Beechdale!) the social status of his ancestry likewise.

By the establishment of this wisely-formulated

social code immigration to Beechdale, if not prohibited, was in a measure, at least, restricted. Those who did succeed, after a long term of probation, in gaining entrance among the elect, felt saved as by fire and counted themselves under everlasting obligations to the powers that were for such salvation.

Mrs. Frances Lansdowne, widow, found a place in this category. She could not claim the honor of being one of the charter members of the Beechdale contingent, but she was—O, felicitous chance—connected with one of those influential constituents, being a sister-in-law of Frederick William Lansdowne, President of the National Sugar Trust Company, and the wealthiest resident of Beechdale.

Mrs. Lansdowne had been a widow for six years. Her husband, Archibald, and Frederick William Lansdowne, had always been the most devoted of brothers, and after Archibald's death at Leyton, his brother manifested the deepest concern and strongest affection toward the bereaved family.

Only four years previous to Mr. Lansdowne's death the family had moved from their Vermont home to Leyton, for Mrs. Lansdowne (formerly Fanny Fowler) had, until the marriage of her uncle, Hiram Littleton, deemed it a matter of policy to remain near the old man. After Katherine and her husband, Wayland Stewart, went to Ohio, she seemed in time to be almost forgotten by her relative. When Fanny's little children began to play about his knee the young mother thought she de-

tected a new affection springing up in his heart which, if carefully fostered, through her efforts, might result in making her little darlings heirs to his property.

But truly "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." Fanny Lansdowne found her well-laid plans frustrated by one fell blow, and doubtless the very means which she had so assiduously been employing to further her interests were the origin of their defeat.

Hiram Littleton, although, as every one supposed, a confirmed bachelor, became so enamored with the sweet prattle of his little grand-nieces that he began to dream of the joys he had lost in the years gone by. He concluded that it was not yet too late to retrieve the past and to raise up heirs of his own to the Littleton acres. But he was a shy old man and took no one into his confidence except a young country lass who lived on one of his farms some thirty miles distant. The village and Fanny Lansdowne received a most decided surprise one bright, sunshiny June morning when Hiram Littleton drove up to his door and gallantly assisted his girl-wife to alight, his face as radiantly happy as if time had gone back fifty years and he was a gay young lover of twenty.

But Fanny Lansdowne was not a woman accustomed to sit down in the ashes and pine. For such as she, extremity meant increased rather than diminished brain activity. Her thoughts began instantly

to turn to her husband's only brother, Frederick William Lansdowne, one of the wealthiest men in his state. She was in no haste to make a move, however, until she was assured all hope was over.

But the improbable in Fanny Lansdowne's case did not come to pass. On the contrary, instead of no heirs, there was, in the course of a year, a bouncing pair of twins. Mrs. Littleton showed no signs of premature decay, and her husband, so far from tiring of his matrimonial venture, was, if possible, more enamoured of it than ever. Then it was that Mrs. Lansdowne, looking at her defrauded offspring—four little girls, who, before long, would be verging on young womanhood—decided that something must be done. A country village was a poor place for girls who had any ambition to "get on" in the world, and she concluded that it would be far better for their future prospects to go where they might be known as the nieces and become identified with the fortunes of Mr. William Frederick Lansdowne, President of the National Sugar Trust Company.

At last, after not a little diplomacy on her part, many tears and protestations (for Archibald Lansdowne seemed strangely unmindful of his children's interests) his wife prevailed upon him to write his brother and enquire as to prospects of a position at Leyton.

A week had hardly passed when the answer came. With a little quicker beating of the heart Archibald

opened the letter to read therein a most kind and hearty business offer. Archibald Lansdowne did not say very much, but he was a quiet, undemonstrative man, and his reticence did not necessarily argue lack of appreciation on his part.

After a decision was reached it did not take long to prepare for setting out to their new home. Mrs. Lansdowne was anxious to try a new field of operation, and she believed implicitly that the day would come when her husband would gratefully attribute all his success in life to her clever management.

But Archibald Lansdowne had not his brother's venturesome, nor yet practical nature. Not long after the arrival in Leyton his heart began to hunger for the old home and associates. He longed to breathe the sweet New England air, redolent with its pungent odors from the forest, to see around him the old familiar faces. He was as a ship on the turbulent sea that has lost its rudder; as a tree cruelly torn from its native soil to be transplanted in a foreign clime.

For several years, however, Archibald Lansdowne bore the burden of life, though in a listless sort of way, and then gave up the struggle. The physicians said the climate did not agree with him, and that as soon as he was able he must return, for a time, at least, to his native hills. But it was not to be, and he breathed out his troubled life in an alien state.

If Mrs. Lansdowne ever blamed herself for her husband's death none ever heard a hint of it; but,

indeed, why should she? She had her children's future at heart and had she not done what any prudent mother must have done? If their father could have been satisfied to see his daughters grow up around him without prospects and living more than likely to be old maids, every one of them, she was not the mother to neglect their interests. She seemed to feel his loss deeply, however, for she shed a great many tears in public, and for all anybody could prove, an equal number in private. But soon —wise little woman that she was—she brushed these signs from her face and tried to find in the dark sky some tiny specks of blue.

Frederick Lansdowne's heart was deeply wounded at the loss of his brother, and he could not do enough for the little family so suddenly bereft. He took the money which came to Fanny as life insurance and invested it so well that Mrs. Lansdowne soon found her income decidedly increasing. Mr. Lansdowne's wife, too, was a kind-hearted woman and had no objection to having her husband do all in his power for his brother's widow, and as the couple had but one child, then married and living abroad, Mrs. Frances Lansdowne's children became once more the recipients of an uncle's affection, and this time it did not seem destined to be so ruthlessly taken from them.

When the Lansdownes had first come West they had resided in Leyton, but after her husband's death the lonely widow felt that she needed the consola-

tion and companionship of her husband's relatives. She readily acquiesced, therefore, in her brother-in-law's desire for the family to move to Beechdale where he might keep a constant watch over the shepherdless little flock; and so it was that Mrs. Lansdowne found herself by and by occupying an enviable position in Beechdale society. From the beginning she had determined to be grafted on the Lansdowne tree, and when Mrs. Frances Lansdowne decided upon a line of action she seldom failed in its accomplishment. Now, after nearly ten years, she felt that she had attained to a success far beyond her most sanguine expectations.

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST TALK.

RS. FRANCES LANSDOWNE sat alone in her breakfast-room. It was her custom to linger there a half-hour or so after the morning repast. It was a mark of gentility to take a little leisure at this time and argued the absence of any vulgar haste in the duties of the morning. Her own self-respect was deepened by this little conventionality and the practice had, she thought, a good moral effect on the servants.

The morning paper was always brought to her at the table. She liked to glance at the head-lines while the meal was being served; later she gave a less hurried perusal of its contents. She was employed now in this second examination of the *Morning Herald*. She had gotten, however, only as far as "Society Gossip," and there Mrs. Lansdowne had paused. Possibly the interest of a number of persons beside herself on this identical morning had been arrested at the same point. There was just one particular item therein which savored, at least for Beechdalians, of a possible bit of scandal. The item in question read as follows:

"The rumor concerning the marriage at Heidel-

berg of Major Dearborne with Fraulein Gertzen of local theatrical fame, has been confirmed The ceremony took place June sixteenth and it is said the Major will bring his bride to Beechdale early in the fall. He has given up his bachelor quarters at the 'Blue Blood Club' and will occupy, on his return, the old Glover homestead on Linden Avenue."

Now Major Dearborne had been a veritable bone of contention in Beechdale society for many years. Aspiring mothers had repeatedly set their social traps, but this particular species of the genus homo had been too wary to be caught and at last the zealous, doting parents had been forced one by one to give over their fruitless attempts. Yet "hope springs eternal in the human breast," and those who had eligible daughters felt once more as they read of the Major's marriage the death pangs of a hope which they had thought long since crushed to earth.

Rumor had associated the Major's name and that of the Fraulein's for several years. The majority of people, however, considered it a temporary bewitchment on the Major's part or a sly little *jeu d'amour*. The wildest flights of conjecture as to the end had never brought them to the awful conclusion that the Major would so lose his head, so dishonor the family escutcheon as to actually contract a misalliance so indisputable. Yet now that very thing had come to pass and society had re-

ceived in consequence a shock almost fatal to its hypersensitive organism. Whether it would be able to recuperate was as yet a calculation entirely beyond the power of any to conjecture.

Mrs. Lansdowne arose from her chair and with the Morning Herald held tightly in her jeweled hand, walked with quick step into the library. There, taking a small pair of silver scissors which hung above her desk, she cut from the column the little item of social news, pregnant with interest to so many. What a harmless bit of print it seemed, yet it possessed the spark that could bring about a mighty conflagration.

When Mrs. Lansdowne had finished, she took pen and paper and prepared to write to her dear friend Mrs. Chatterton, to whom she had been owing a letter for at least three days. The sense of duty suddenly weighed heavily upon her. She would write this very morning. She might, too, just as well enclose the little clipping. Mrs. Chatterton would be interested in it, no doubt; so would her two daughters, Phoebe and Sara. A little malicious smile now and then darted furtively from her blue eyes as she proceeded with her friendly bit of correspondence.

She felt highly honored in being able to write a familiar letter to Mrs. Chatterton, one of the social leaders of Beechdale. It invariably sent strange little thrills down her spinal column whenever she had the opportunity of informing some of her

friends, less favored than herself, that she had just heard from "dear" Mrs. Chatterton.

Mrs. Lansdowne was a rather careless woman about her letters and papers. It was one of her very few faults. She always meant to have everything in its place, but often her good intentions fell short of the reality. When, therefore, she went to put her hand on Mrs. Chatterton's last letter to read it over, it was not there; nor could she find it in the pigeon hole where she kept all her unanswered correspondence. Becoming impatient, a natural consequence when a thing is not found where it should be, she began to open drawers and investigate compartments promiscuously. In her rummaging she came, by chance, upon a letter which, as it fell from the papers in her hand, slid from its half-torn envelope. She started as though it had been something alive. Her eyes fell upon the closing paragraph. She read it mechanically:

"Will you, for you are not far away, keep a watch-care over my motherless child when I am gone? I leave her with the utmost trust and contentment to her father's protection and love, but there will soon come a time in her life in which you, Fanny, a woman, may more truly supply to her a mother's place.

"My greatest wish for her is that she grow up to be a perfectly rounded woman, and to attain such result she must come in contact with all that is highest and best both socially and intellectually.

You know what I mean by 'noblest and best,' and that I would lament equally deficiency or abnormity in her intellectual, moral or spiritual nature.

"This is your trust, and may God, whose instruments we all are, guide and help you to carry out His highest designs for my darling Pearl.

Your affectionate sister,

"KATHERINE STEWART."

Often it happens, in the midst of life's duties, one is called, inexplicably to one's self, to pause; to come suddenly face to face with the past. After that brief, almost momentary glance when the attempt is made to readjust one's self to the present, it is found that in the interval life's course has been strangely changed. So Mrs. Lansdowne, after reading these few lines, when she turned again to search for the missing letter, found, somehow, that her recent interest in it had suddenly abated. Unconsciously to herself, fate had veered her in another direction.

Viewing her past, she had beheld there the ghostly form of neglected duty issuing from the grave of her own selfishness, and summoned forth as it were, by the words of a dead sister's letter. Perhaps never before had she so nearly entered the penetralia of her own nature. It was not an experience "devoutly to be wished."

She knew that she had proved unfaithful to her sister's charge. Several times in these last five years she had written her niece letters filled with

advice, the best of the kind she had to draw upon at short notice; but during this period her maternal duties had been so arduous and exacting that though she had often planned a little visit to Cloverdale, such a plan had never been carried out, and she had not seen the girl since her mother's death.

Mrs. Lansdowne was a woman to act quickly and decisively. She seldom failed to rise to the exigencies of the moment. Acknowledging to herself, therefore, that she had neglected a sacred duty entrusted to her, she forthwith set out to regain her point of moral divergence by a path which she felt sure would lead back to it.

An hour later found Mrs. Frances Lansdowne finishing a long, motherly letter to her niece, and contained in it was a most urgent and doubtless, for the time at least, sincere invitation for her to spend the coming winter at Beechdale. She wrote that she would expect her soon after the return of herself and family from their summer outing. This would probably be the last of September.

The letter finished and posted, Mrs. Lansdowne heaved a sigh of relief. She congratulated herself upon the fact that in so short a time she had retrieved the past.

CHAPTER IV.

A SOCIAL DILEMMA.

THOUGH Mrs. Lansdowne, after the invitation was given to her niece, felt that a great weight had fallen from her shoulders, she concluded later that the arrangement might not prove satisfactory after all.

In her alarmed and perhaps undue haste she had overlooked the fact that her three elder daughters had not been consulted in regard to the step she had taken. Not until too late did she begin to figure on their possible opposition. At present they were visiting school friends in Detroit, and Mrs. Lansdowne awaited their return in great trepidation.

She made use of the interim by conducting countless imaginary conversations with her daughters in regard to that fatal invitation sent to her niece. Mrs. Lansdowne invariably came out victorious in these little fancied controversies and effectually silenced all objections by her superior logic. She planned it all so that the vital topic might be brought about naturally and at the same time favorably to her own interests. But plans are but seldom realized except in dreams. In this case the bomb exploded rather prematurely, and Mrs. Lans-

downe was precipitated in the very midst of affairs. "O, mamma," cried Katheryn, before she and her sisters had been in the house five minutes, "what do you think Aline and Florence are planning? A house-party! Isn't that glorious? It is to be given about the middle of October. They want us to be on hand without fail. Aline says they couldn't possibly get along without us."

"And their house is just perfect for such an affair," added Elinor, excitedly. "The dearest little nooks and corners all over. They are going to give a proposal party, too, during the time. Though it will all be in fun, I shouldn't wonder if some real serious things came of it. Aline said she wagered a five-pound box of Huyler's chocolates that we three would come home engaged."

"And we were treated so beautifully," chimed in Yzabel. "All we had to do, you know, was just to say, in off-hand way, that we were the nieces of Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne and everyone was immediately prostrate. Of course, we may go, may we not, mamma?"

Mrs. Lansdowne, suddenly appealed to, turned a trifle red, cleared her throat, and hesitated. Her daughters took immediate alarm.

"O, mamma, you don't intend to refuse! What a disappointment! Why, we told her we would accept! O, dear!" came in little horrified gasps.

But Mrs. Lansdowne had gotten her own powers of speech somewhat under control during these

vocal explosions of her three daughters, and replied rationally but with certain strained calmness in her tones:

"Girls, I have invited your cousin Pearl to spend some time with us and I have asked her to be here early in October. It would look rather rude to go off when she had just come, and it would hardly do to take her with you," ventured Mrs. Lansdowne, falteringly.

"Merciful heavens, perish the thought," exclaimed Katheryn with clasped hands.

If Mrs. Lansdowne had announced the fact that Barabaghansi of India or Iteweki Helelube of Hawaii had been invited to her home there would have been doubtless a chorus of approvals, but—a cousin from the country! This was gall and wormwood to their æsthetic natures.

"O, mamma, what on earth made you do such a wild thing as that?" gasped Yzabel. "Have you lost your senses entirely?"

Mrs. Lansdowne could not take with equanimity this slur cast upon her mental capacity. It was time, she saw, to exert herself and explain her actions. She must not acknowledge the charge of weakness in the matter, so she proceeded at once with a little speech—really impromptu, by the way—in order to apprise her excited daughters of the seemingly providential circumstances which had led to her unprecedented act.

It was a difficult matter, however, to convince

them of the justness or necessity of her action when she was unable to place them in the same circumstances that had impelled her to do what she did. A dead sister's letter and a niece's claims to her interest naturally in no way appealed to them. They could see nothing but the overwhelming disgrace that awaited.

Katheryn was the eldest of Mrs. Lansdowne's daughters and was considered to have inherited her mother's polemic powers. The need of an immediate coup d'etat, if the day were to be gained was evident. The sisters turned instinctively to Katheryn to take the initiative and she responded.

"Now, mamma," she began, with a confidential little smile in her eyes and a tone as unruffled as if the recent domestic whirlwind had been but a playful zephyr, "you surely have not forgotten why Pearl has never been invited to visit us before. You know we have always felt that we owed some consideration to Uncle William and Aunt Clarissa. When they were kind enough to take us under their wing we did not think it fair to ask them to identify themselves with all our country relations. If the connection with Uncle William were on your side, mamma, it might be a little different."

Mrs. Lansdowne recognized at once that her daughter's reasoning was unassailable. As far back as she could recollect, certainly as far back as when she was obliged to become the rudder of the domestic bark, she had never been in such a

dilemma. "Well, Katheryn," she said in a tone which betrayed none of the uncertainty that was in her heart, "in one way, perhaps, I have taken an imprudent step, or at least what appears as such," she added, cautiously. "What I did, however, was done entirely from a high sense of duty. I have very little apprehension," she went on, encouragingly, "that my invitation will result in an acceptance, for I hardly think that your Uncle Wayland will allow his only child to spend so long a time from home among those who might be virtually considered strangers to her. I will take care that a second entreaty is not added.

"But you are all under a decidedly wrong impression if you think that your cousin's coming would result in humiliation to us. No sister of mine, rest assured, would ever have brought up her daughter in such a way that her actions would disgrace herself or others. Katherine was, of course, a farmer's wife, and her daughter has been reared on a farm; there might be a few little points—it would not be strange if such were the case—wherein she would have to be instructed. Beyond that I think you have no need to be fearful."

Mrs. Lansdowne had hardly finished her well-put reply to Katheryn's argument when a noisy, bounding step was heard in the hall. In a moment the youngest daughter of the house, a girl of fifteen, came rushing, with boisterous salutations, into the

room where the other members of the family had been conversing.

When she heard Maud's approach Mrs. Lansdowne cautioned her daughters to be silent upon their recent topic of conversation. It was hardly essential that the whole of Beechdale should be made confidantes of their family affairs, and undoubtedly such would be the result were their young sister to become cognizant of how matters stood. So, after Maud had greeted her sisters and had asked in one breath quite as many questions as it would take an hour to answer, they all retired in a seemingly placid frame of mind to the library below, where cake and chartreuse were served to refresh the weary travelers.

CHAPTER V.

GETTING UP IN LIFE.

MRS. LANSDOWNE had three daughters eligible for matrimony and it was incumbent upon her, as a mother whose eyes were ever open to their interests, to spend the outing months where her children might be best appreciated. The two weeks following their return, therefore, were filled with all the bustle of preparation consequent upon the anticipation of a summer trip.

For several years the family had been the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne at their summer home on the Hudson. This season, however, Mr. and Mrs. Lansdowne had, unfortunately for their relatives, decided to visit their daughter, wife of the English Consul to Berlin. They had grown a little weary of viewing the same scenes year after year and had concluded to lease their magnificent villa to Mr. Jacob Le Monde, the vice-president of the National Sugar Trust Co.

Only ten years before Jake Lemmon had opened a dingy little ten-by-twelve room in Trenton, N. J., where he sold sugar and eggs and glue on commission. Those were dark days for Jake, but everybody did not know about them, thank heav-

en! Now he was Mr. Jacob Le Monde of New York City, and he had almost forgotten that ignominious past himself. He had money now, shoals of it, and he had daughters; a home on the Hudson wasn't a bad move if one wanted to get on familiar terms with some of the nabobs of New York City.

Thus it happened that Mrs. Frances Lansdowne was left to decide for herself upon the all-important question of a summer retreat, and it was not an easy problem to solve. One had to consider so many things. Of course it made very little difference to her where she went, dear, unselfish, little woman. She only lived for her children's happiness since her great bereavement. Indeed, she often told her friends that a quiet little spot in the country would be entirely satisfactory to her; but of course the dear children were young and youth needed change and excitement, so, after a good deal of consulting both within and beyond the family circle, Mrs. Lansdowne determined at last to take advantage of an opening brought about through her friend, Mrs. Judge Chatterton. Mrs. Chatterton also had concluded to let her cottage—a small one at Bar Harbor. She had offered the privilege of taking it to Mrs. Frances Lansdowne.

Mrs. Lansdowne was delighted; first, because the place seemed to offer just the favoring conditions she was looking for, and secondly, because she felt herself honored in being the first of Mrs. Chat-

terton's friends to be invited to occupy Windhurst Cottage.

Mrs. Chatterton was, perhaps, aware of Mrs. Lansdowne's admiration for herself, and it might be was influenced by the knowledge of such predelection when desirous of renting her summer home. However, Mrs. Chatterton's motives are of no particular interest. The result is more to the point, and the result was just this, that a few days later a gushing little note was received by her from Mrs. Lansdowne, and it contained an acceptance of Mrs. Chatterton's proposal.

The middle of July was nearly at hand and Beechdale was experiencing its usual exodus. Those who could afford to go, went; but those who could not afford it—went, also. To be able to endure, without serious results the climate of an inland city, though away from its bustle and roar, argued a degenerate nervous organism, to say the least. After the gayeties of a brilliant winter tired human nature demanded a rest. Society's edict demanded it and physicians advised it.

It was a time of sifting for Beechdale, a veritable separation of the sheep from the goats. If any had by strategy crept into the fold, had, as it were, been warmed and fed in the arms of society during the frosts of winter, the warm breezes of summer would bring a rude awakening. The sheep would hear the voice of the shepherd calling to pastures fair and far and the goats would resign themselves

to the disgraceful alternative of being left behind to nibble on what was left.

It had been whispered, and somewhat loudly too, that Jack Folger's wife—poor Jack was at his wits' end living at Beechdale, people said—owed a three hundred dollar bill to the modiste when she went away last year; but Mrs. Folger had now arrived at that critical point where she could not bear up under the torrid suns of Beechdale and Madame Renaud, the modiste could, as had been well exemplified.

Mrs. Folger, by the way, was becoming quite closely identified with Beechdale, so she thought. She congratulated herself on the fact and began to feel a very tender regard springing up in her heart for the Beechdalian aristocracy. Indeed, she felt she really could not go away this summer without saying *au revoir* to a few of her dear acquaintances. So it came about that one oppressive July afternoon Mrs. Lansdowne's maid carried up stairs cards which bore the name of Mrs. John Folger. Mrs. Lansdowne and her two elder daughters were seated together discussing the final arrangements in regard to Bar Harbor.

Mrs. Lansdowne was annoyed at the interruption. Mrs. Folger was not a person with whom she considered it an advantage to be intimate. Indeed, as it seemed to her, the advantage was altogether on Mrs. Folger's side. About all the claim that person had to recognition in Beechdale was that she kept

a cook, gave handsome euchre parties and went away for the summer. But notwithstanding all this, she had not been given much attention until some months since, when her dashing brother, Frank Boskin, had put in an appearance.

Though Beechdale did not know it, this was really Mrs. Folger's last play; but hearts were trumps and she won. Soon that lady found herself the center of attraction and doting mammas and desperate daughters suddenly made the discovery that Mrs. Folger was really quite nice and her brother just too sweet to live. Still Beechdale looked somewhat askance at Mrs. Folger and could not yet be persuaded to take her to its sensitve and immaculate bosom. Mrs. Folger occupied at present a sort of probationary position in Beechdale society, and she meant to take advantage of it while it was hers, so she made the venture to call on Mrs. Frances Lansdowne.

After a half hour or so Mrs. Folger, fuming away in the library, gave a sigh of relief to hear the slight flutter of women's robes on the stairway. In a moment Mrs. Lansdowne and Katheryn walked in with a sort of genteel wilted air about them, to greet their plebeian visitor.

"How brave of you, Mrs. Folger, to venture out such an oppressive day! How strong your nerves must be! I was just saying to Katheryn a moment ago I did wish we had the constitutions of some people."

Mrs. Folger flushed at the imputation. She was fearful that she had unwittingly committed a breach of etiquette which would not lift her in the estimation of her hostess.

Mrs. Folger was not a woman quick to meet an opponent. She was nonplussed and rather hazy as to how to reply to this novel salutation. She concluded to let the cutting remark go by unnoticed, and she said quite sweetly and with a little forced smile:

"Oh, I am so sorry to have disturbed you if you were not feeling well. I presume you were lying down."

"No, no," replied Mrs. Lansdowne, reassuringly. "I am feeling as well as usual. I am always completely wilted as soon as the warm weather sets in and my children, poor dears, are just like me. Dr. Winthrop said our nervous systems are so exceedingly high-strung that we are especially susceptible to every climatic change. Yzabel and Elinoir are feeling it this year more than the rest, I believe. Yzabel asked me to excuse her, by the way; she is so fatigued this afternoon. You see we are about two weeks late in getting away this summer and we are all suffering from it. I am anxious to go just as soon as possible now. Perhaps you have seen by the paper—what inveterate gossipers those reporters are, by the way—that we are to take Mrs. Judge Chatterton's cottage this season." Mrs.

Folger nodded assent and her hostess went on languidly:

"It will be a delightful change for the girls. I want Elinoir to get quite strong during the summer, too, that she may be able to go through with that most trying ordeal of 'coming out' in society. It is a trial for a young girl, I think."

Mrs. Lansdowne paused and concluded to give her visitor a slight chance to make a remark on her own account. She leaned her head against the satin rest on her chair and let her jewelled hands lie in indolent repose in her lap. But as Mrs. Folger did not seem inclined to take advantage of the opportunity Katheryn concluded to exert her conversational powers by a slight inquiry.

"Where are you going this summer, Mrs. Folger?"

Mrs. Folger brightened. She could at last meet her friends on common ground.

"I expect to go to the seashore, too. Jack is anxious for me to go. The salt air agrees with me, Jack thinks."

Mrs. Folger always would manifest her plebeian breeding by alluding to her husband as "Jack." It sent a nervous little thrill of horror all through Mrs. Lansdowne and Katheryn.

"At what point do you think of locating?" questioned Mrs. Lansdowne.

"Atlantic City! We have been there before and like it so much!" rattled Mrs. Folger airily.

"Oh!" Mrs. Lansdowne could not for the life of her have refrained from expressing a certain well bred contempt in that little monosyllabic utterance. Mrs. Folger's quick ear caught the jarring note and she was discomfited.

"Have you ever been there?" she asked nervously.

"No, I never have in the summer. They say the place is quite exciting then, but they have—well, you know they have so many people there! Undoubtedly some very nice persons go (patronizingly). One is apt, though, to be thrown with such a mixed crowd on account of the cheap rates. Where there are so many people"—always with that significant emphasis on people—"there is danger of breathing in microbes, Dr. Winthrop says."

Mrs. Folger repented in sackcloth and ashes, figuratively speaking, that she had ever thought of making this unfortunate call, and one was all sufficient. She would go no farther. She saw plainly, how plainly her throbbing heart told her, that certainly there was a great difference yet between herself and those to the manor born. She had not thought so before—poor, silly, little creature. She attempted to reply, but she did not make much out of it, she was sure, and then she arose to go.

"Well, we will say 'good-bye,' Mrs. Folger," said Mrs. Lansdowne quite sweetly. "We expect to start for Bar Harbor day after tomorrow."

"I hope you will have a pleasant summer," volunteered Katheryn.

Mrs. Folger extended like compliments, and then, according to the best approved rules of Beechdale etiquette, Mrs. Lansdowne and her daughter turned with a little farewell bow and retired to the library beyond, and left their guest to try with cold, nerveless fingers to unlatch the door and to superintend her own exit.

CHAPTER VI.

AT CLOVER FARM.

FIVE was the hour set for tea at Clover Farm and Janet was quite as punctual as the clock. When the harsh note of the "dinner horn" sounded out on the quiet air, those for whom its summons was intended would swear to its being just half after four. And when tea was announced the little family at Clover Farm knew without looking that the old-fashioned clock on the dining-room mantel was about to proclaim in clock language the hour for the evening meal.

On this particular evening Philip, Pearl and her father sat down at the usual time, but they lingered longer than was their custom over the dainty repast. The faithful old time-piece had tolled out its six strokes before they arose.

Pearl reached for the bunch of brilliant nasturtiums that adorned the centre of the snowy cloth:

"Father," she said, as Wayland Stewart turned to enter the sitting-room, "Phillip has promised to walk with me to Mrs. Ferris'. I want to take her this beautiful bunch of nasturtiums. She so loves flowers. Hers have amounted to very little this season. It does seem too bad, doesn't it, that now

she is getting old and is too weak to attend to them herself, Amanda will not take any interest in them. The poor old lady was looking at them when I passed the other day, and she was deploring their wrecked appearance."

"O, Amanda has no eyes for the beautiful," answered her father. "Her nature has never risen to that height, poor girl. Work and drudgery, to her synonymous terms because she makes them so, are all of life for her. Give my kind regards to Mrs. Ferris, daughter, and tell her I am glad to hear her rheumatism is better. Phillip," turning to the young man, "you might soon have a fine practice if Mrs. Ferris continues to sing your praises." Phillip smiled and flushed a little with pleasure at the compliment. Pearl wiped the water from the stems of her fragrant treasures and then she and her cousin started on their errand of kindness.

Mrs. Ferris lived only a quarter of a mile up the Pike and the two young people, awake to all the beauties of a dying October day, walked along with sauntering step. They lingered now and then to admire some distant view of gorgeous foliage glowing under the fires of an autumn sunset.

"Look, Phillip," said the girl suddenly in breathless admiration, "look yonder at those clouds, great piles of gold against the purple and blood-red; how those trees blend with the coloring and what a soft mellow light there is all about us! How few, how

very few artists are able to depict such beauty faithfully, and I wonder why."

"Because," replied Phillip, "one must see with the soul, as well as with the physical organ of sight. That is a gift that many have not developed. They may have the delicate touch, be perfect in the art of imitating what they see, but such handiwork as that yonder must be viewed with an inner vision. Nature is divine and can be comprehended only through that which is also divine." Then, after a pause, as if communing with himself:

"To what heights must the soul mount before it can behold the marvelous things."

"Yes," broke in the girl passionately, "but men seem to have lost sight of that. O, Phillip, why is it that so many of the people, here around us, have so little thought of what is grand and true and beautiful. All nature is pleading with them constantly and they heed no more than the dumb brutes yonder. Work! Work! Work! that is the only idea beaten in upon their brains. To accumulate that which may vanish in a moment, as the sand houses of children, is what they are striving for. Why should not our country people develop the divinest virtues of human nature. They must work; it is the law of progress. It is only the way in which they work which debases them. Why, Phillip, do we drink in this beauty, why are we thrilled and exalted by the

strange, sweet music that is all about us while others are ignorant of it all?"

Phillip Vail looked with reverent tenderness into the rapt face turned to his. He was about to answer when suddenly Pearl saw coming toward them, across the meadow of Farmer Brunt, the tall, swinging figure of a woman.

"There is Amanda Haines now, Phillip," exclaimed Pearl. "I suppose she is coming over to see Carrie Brunt."

As they looked, the woman waved to them, and called in a loud, clear voice, "Wait a minute!" Phillip and Pearl crossed over from the road and came up to the fence separating the Brunt farm from the pike.

"How are you both?" she asked bluntly with unflinching but kindly glance from one to the other. "We are well," answered Pearl. "Mr. Vail and I were just going to your house. I wanted to take some nasturiums to your grandmother. I hope she is feeling better."

"Well, I'm glad you're goin'? She'll be tickled to see you, especially Mr. Vail. She was tuck down last night with a pain in her leg and that awful misery in her side. That doctor at the village don't know nothin', so she just doctored herself. She's doin' right smart today. I allow if she don't git no worse she'll be around in a day or so. I left Bud with the baby and thought I'd stop over to see Carrie a few minutes. Her mother wasn't to

meetin' Sunday and some one told me that the doctor thought Carrie wouldn't last long now."

"How is your baby, Mrs. Haines?" asked Phillip. "He is a handsome, sturdy, little fellow for his age."

The mother smiled for the first time—at the compliment, and then quickly put one hand across her mouth as in apology for the toothless space therein.

"Oh, he'll do," she said, turning off with the same loose gait in which she had advanced. "If he grows up half as good as his father, I'll be satisfied. Good-bye!"

The two stood for a moment watching her and then they turned silently and started more quickly than before up the pike. Pearl broke the silence first.

"Phillip," said she, "would anyone believe, unless they were told, that Amanda Haines is but twenty-three? Five years ago when Bud Haines was going to see her, she seemed to take a commendable pride in the way she looked and acted. Now that is all past. She is married and I suppose life's consummation has been reached. No wonder, Philip," and a little twinkle shone in her dark eyes for a moment, "that people do not long for their country cousins to visit them!"

A grave look came into Phillip's face. "Have you decided Pearl," he asked, "not to accept your aunt's invitation to Beechdale?"

"I had decided," she said throwing her head

back a little now proudly. "I felt quite sure after that second letter in answer to mine that she feared my acceptance. But now I have changed my mind about going. Amanda Haines tells me that I have a message for my aunt and her high-bred daughters. It is this: that the country of itself cannot debase any more than the city cannot in itself uplift. It is only we ourselves who can do either."

"What a charming champion of rural life," observed Phillip smiling. "I wish with all my heart, there were more such."

"I will tell father tonight that I have changed my mind and that I am going to Aunt Frances'. You know he wanted very much that I should, but I was too proud then to go." She threw up her head and laughed, but there was no resentment in its tones to mar the sweetness.

"And now you are too proud to stay at home. Is that it?" She nodded. Just then her eyes turned once more to the West. But one long streak of flaming red remained of all the recent glory. The shadows were already upon them.

"Let us hasten, Phillip. It will soon be quite dark." she said, pointing to the distant horizon. To the young man Pearl's face seemed to have caught and appropriated the trembling, mystic beauty of the sunset. "God bless her!" he cried in his heart. "May the evil of this world never leave its polluting stain upon her pure, sweet soul."

CHAPTER VII.

NEWSPAPER GOSSIP.

MRS. FRANCES LANSDOWNE and her daughters had returned from their summer outing and society had been duly apprised of the important event through the columns of the *Morning Herald*. She had dropped a few lines from Bar Harbor to the society editress and inadvertently mentioned her expected departure for home with the embarrassing result that the little confidence had been immediately betrayed.

Miss Burton was a person by no means susceptible of flattery, but, to be on familiar terms with the Four Hundred was quite necessary to her profession; so, though she recognized the incentive to the many little complimentary speeches which she received, she held her peace and entertained herself with merry little laughs behind the backs of those who offered them. Why should she not? She was well paid for the disclosures which they made, all unwittingly to themselves, of their many vanities; and they, dear women, were more than rewarded when they read the little daily bulletins appearing constantly in society news concerning their movements. They congratulated themselves,

one and all, that without revealing any real desire for notice they had managed to let the editress know just the very things they were most anxious to have announced; and so the bright little woman kept on laughing and writing and,—endorsing her checks.

"Mamma," remarked Yzabel one morning, after she had spent an hour's enjoyment in perusing the social scrap-book, "when this morning's notice about Elinoir is pasted in, it will make the twentieth since we went away. I wager that is more than Aunt Clarissa or Mrs. Chatterton have had in the same length of time."

"Mrs. Chatterton has had quite a number this season, my dear," returned Mrs. Lansdowne doubtfully. "I wish we had thought to count them."

"O, Yzabel," exclaimed Elinoir, "do see if my name is spelled correctly. I think it is a positive shame that it is so often wrong. The 'noir' gives such a tone."

Yzabel looked again at the clipping she had just fastened in the book.

"Yes, my much abused sister, rest contented and give Miss Burton a red mark, for it is *comme il faut* and looks quite well. I'll read it to see how it sounds."

"Mrs. Lansdowne and her charming daughters arrived home last Wednesday after a three months' stay at Bar Harbor. All of Mrs. Lansdowne's daughters are fascinating and Miss Elinoir, who

takes her place in Society as one of the winter's buds, will, with her many accomplishments and charming manners, make a welcome addition to those who have already entered the exclusive circle at Beechdale."

"I am relieved," observed Elinoir, bending over her sister's shoulder. "It makes my blood run cold to have it spelled that old-fashioned way. I am glad we are not having to see ourselves in print as Miss Kitty and Miss Bell and Miss Ella. Mamma, I do believe, too, if it had not been for us, we should still be disgraced with those horrid nicknames."

"And it was fortunate," added Katheryn, "that we put the fancy spelling in at once. I should not have liked to make a second change. Yzabel, you have the best of it; that 'Yz' especially is quite distingué."

"Yes, I have never seen anyone else spell it so," answered Yzabel, "though I dare say some one will have the audacity to copy it. People are so impertinent."

"Yzabel better get her name copyrighted," volunteered Maud, who was lying on her back reading the third volume of the "Flaxie Frizzle Stories."

"Mamma," cried Yzabel wrathfully, "why don't you make Maud quit saying such hateful things? She is only jealous because she can't change her own."

"I'm not jealous!" retorted Maud defiantly. I

can spell it with a 'w' instead of a 'u.' You said so yourself."

"Maud," said her mother in severe tones, "you must be more deferential to your sisters. Remember you are not 'out' yet, and must keep a little more in the background until you are in England, where your great-grandfather lived. They will not tolerate such freedom in children."

Maud muttered "shoot England," and flaunted angrily out of the room. As she did so she threw a letter into Yzabel's lap. "There's a letter Betty gave me as I came upstairs, and I forgot to hand it over."

Just whether this statement of Maud's delinquency was the true one was not then questioned, for Yzabel recognized the handwriting with a little thrill of horror. "Mamma, it's from Pearl," she exclaimed. "From Pearl!" gasped a chorus of voices.

With nervous fingers Mrs. Lansdowne opened the letter and read:

"Dear Aunt Frances:

I had about decided to give up my visit to Beechdale, as I wrote you some little time ago; but after considering the matter, and influenced somewhat by father's desire for me to have the change from country life, I have concluded (if I may after so long deliberation) to accept your kind invitation, and I will hope to be with you some time in the early part of October.

Remember me kindly to my cousins and believe me

Sincerely your niece,

Pearl Stewart.

September 20, 1897.

P. S.—I will write again more definitely as to time."

"I knew she would come, mamma!" burst out Katheryn, almost crying from sheer vexation. "We might just as well make up our minds now to be disgraced and perhaps we may become used to the thought by the time she arrives," added Elinoir resignedly. "Haven't you anything to say, Yzabel," she asked, turning to her sister.

"You have expressed my sentiments perfectly," answered Yzabel. "There is no special need to unbottle my vial of wrath. I'll draw on it later. I must say, though, mamma, that our fair cousin makes no attempts to give expression to sentiments she does not feel. Just listen!" taking the letter from her mother's lap and curling her lip disdainfully: "Remember me *kindly* to my cousins. Sincerely your niece, Pearl Stewart. No love lost there, surely. The whole letter is about as cool an epistolatory specimen as one could inagine."

Mrs. Lansdowne heaved a sigh and arose. She did not care to pursue the subject further.

"Well, girls, you may blame me if you will, but my conscience approves my action," said Mrs. Lansdowne in an injured tone and with a pathetic

droop at the corners of the mouth which she knew so exceedingly well how to effect.

"What cannot be cured must be endured," said Katheryn philosopicahlly, as her mother walked slowly to the door, "but your conscience must have had a very bad attack of inflammation at that time, mamma, and we will have the privilege, I suppose, of reaping the benefits!"

Mrs. Lansdowne sighed again in a most dejected way and left the room. She knew she had precipitated this domestic catastrophe and she did not feel equal to the strain of entering into any arguments concerning an act which she now felt to have been the one great mistake of her life.

"She will be here in time for my 'coming out' party. What éclat it will add to the occasion," remarked Elinoir derisively. "Do you suppose," earnestly, "that we could possibly get her into a presentable condition by that time? Heavens! what a delight to have one's hair stand on end every few moments by some disgraceful breach of etiquette or some rhetorical display of Cloverdale culture."

"She'll have to change her name, that's certain," said Yzabel with great decision. "*Pearl* Stewart, forsooth! Why, there is everything in a name, and no one would think her much with that silly and plebeian appellation. Hand me that dictionary, Elinoir. Let's look her up. P's—yes, here it is! Pearl, Margaret, Margaret! That's fine! Margaret she must be then!"

"No! No! Yzabel" broke in Katheryn. "Let it be Marguerite. That's Frenchy, you know. Perhaps," laughing, "we can trace some of her ancestors back to the French."

"Stewart would look better spelled S-t-u-a-r-t, too," suggested Yzabel. "There, it is written out! How does it strike you? That will help to cut some figure in the *Herald* and the *Beechdale Argus*, won't it? Miss Marguerine Stuart of—of—"

"Don't mention where, Katheryn, for heaven's sake. That would be a dead give away," interposed Elinoir in horrified tone. "If it should come to the point of disclosing the paternal nest we will trump up some story about her father's ill health and the absolute necessity of his living in the country. But we must be sure to give the impression that he merely directs the work on his farm and—well, in short, that he is and always has been a gentleman farmer; one of the English type, I mean."

"Well," remarked Katheryn complacently, "I think we have arranged things wonderfully well for so short a time. But the thing that rests most heavily upon me is that we have a very uncertain quantity to deal with in Miss Marguerite. How do we know but that she will be the infant terrible, and then—merciful stars—the disgrace!"

"Don't borrow trouble, Katheryn," returned Yzabel. "There is no use to think of that until we see her; then we can size her up instanter. She may have to be flattered or coaxed—or commanded.

Some one of these plans, though, will certainly be effectual. Let's go and tell mamma that her daughters are going to face the results of her hyperconscientiousness with martyrlike courage and determination."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIETY.

MAJOR DEARBORNE and his charming bride are sojourning in the Adirondacks, they having arrived in New York on the Hamburg-American liner, Graf Waldersee. They are expected in Beechdale in time for the fifth anniversary of the Leyton Chapter of the Society of the Sons of the Revolution, of which the Major is a prominent and highly-respected members."

The above notice had appeared in the *Sunday Herald*. On Monday, the day after the receipt of her niece's letter, Mrs. Lansdowne was surprised and delighted to receive an invitation from her dear friend, Mrs. Chatterton, to a luncheon, just a small affair and very informal, by the way. It was really meant as a reunion of the French Club, after the separation of the last few months. That, at least, was what Mrs. Chatterton gave her friends to understand. But women are suspicious individuals, and the invitation coming so closely on the heels of that little notice in the *Sunday Herald*, the fair recipients insisted upon a vital and intimate connection between the two events.

The French Club numbered only ten members,

but these, be it understood, were the upper ten, and such a representative gathering at this time was of deep significance.

Mrs. Lansdowne had spent an almost sleepless night after the little disturbance in the domestic circle which her tender conscience had brought about. She had not been able to dissipate the forebodings of an impending calamity from her mind until the reception of Mrs. Chatterton's note of invitation. After that, however, the domestic horizon seemed to brighten.

The breech between mother and daughters was once more repaired and the four drawn closely together in the delightful little discussions of the Major's affairs and in speculations as to what would be the verdict of the Beechdale jury which was to sit upon the Major's case shortly; for that such was the ulterior purpose of the gathering probably no one of the ten even for a moment doubted.

The invitations were for one o'clock Wednesday, and fifteen minutes before the hour designated a carriage rolled up the long gravelled path, leading to the Chatterton mansion. The one occupant—a lady—alighted.

"Have the carriage here by four, Franklin," she said with a slight imperious sweep of the hand. Then, seeing another carriage turn in at the same gate, the lady thereupon took particular care to manipulate her elegant grey tailor-made in such a

manner as to show to the best advantage its violet taffeta lining. She walked slowly up the steps—very slowly. Anything approaching haste would have evinced a most vulgar desire to be initiated into the mysteries beyond the great closed doors. As the last step was ascended the door was swung back by the colored butler and the newly arrived guest was directed to the library beyond.

Mrs. Chatterton sat within to all appearances deeply engrossed in a piece of embroidery. With an effective little start she arose from her chair as her guest entered and extended toward her a hand of welcome. Perhaps Mrs. Chatterton had been spending half the morning in that identical place, absorbed in the wonders of art and had but just realized that she was "booked" for a most informal luncheon.

"How lovely of you to come, Mrs. Fiswick!" exclaimed Mrs. Chatterton! "Having just returned yesterday, as your husband informed me, I was afraid the fatigue consequent upon so long a journey might prevent you from making one of us today; though I hoped, when Mr. Fiswick told you how very informal a gathering it was to be, you would decide favorably."

Before Mrs. Fiswick was quite through murmuring her profuse appreciation of Mrs. Chatterton's invitation four other ladies joined the hostess and her first guest. The regulation complimentary speeches were passed between the new arrivals and

their hostess and all were invited to be seated, and they did so with as much ease and grace as possible.

They chatted on for a few moments until all the guests had arrived; then promptly at the appointed time they were asked to partake of a delicious repast.

As it was given in honor of the French Club, it was quite apropos to have on the dainty souvenirs some brief quotation *en Francaise*, and the guests twisted their pretty mouths and puckered their powdered brows over the irritating lines which would not accommodate themselves to intelligible English in spite of all they could do. There was ever an incorrigible little word or two that obstinately refused to be righted; but the kind hostess, who had very prudently prepared herself for any such emergencies, kindly enlightened her perplexed guests. Monsieur Bereil should certainly have been there. How his little fat body would have doubled itself up with laughter afterwards just to remember the linguistic attempts of the dear madames.

For a long time there was an uninterrupted "flow of reason and a feast of soul"; then Mrs. Chatterton alluded to the previous Sunday's excellent sermon at the church of The Holy Angels." It has made me think deeply during the past week of the hold Satan is getting upon *all* classes; even among the "haute naissance," she remarked pointedly. And the ladies united with Mrs. Chatterton in her opinion and indorsed her French with emphatic, affirmative nods.

Then the subject of Major Dearborne's marriage was broached.

"How can we, ladies, mothers most of us," exclaimed Mrs. Chatterton dramatically, "receive into our midst one who has so shamelessly dishonored womanhood?" and nine ladies shook their nine heads solemnly. "I never dreamed the Major could so far forget himself and his honored name as to marry the woman," said Mrs. Winthrop, the doctor's wife. "I fear he will rue it yet. Only think of the lovely sweet girls he might have had—Miss Phoebe, Miss Sara or Miss Katheryn and a host of others!"

Mrs. Winthrop could speak upon this subject without embarrassment, as she had neither daughters nor nieces of her own. Mrs. Chatterton and Mrs. Lansdowne gave little deprecatory gestures of the hand as to say, "The mere thought of giving up our daughters gives us torture inexplicable."

"Is it really as scandalous as reported?" inquired Mrs. Fiswick in solicitous tones.

"I'm afraid so," replied Mrs. Chatterton. "The Judge, you know, had very good means of ascertaining the truth. He heard quite directly from a friend who was travelling in Germany this winter and who met the two at Carlsruhe."

"What are we to do! What are we to do!" repeated Mrs. Lansdowne in distressed tones. "If we refuse to receive her the Major will be mortally offended, and really—except for this mistake, the

Major is such an acceptible addition to our set; always so pleasant and of such *bel esprit.*"

"And he comes of such fine family, you know," chimed in Mrs. McKnight. "I believe he can trace his ancestry to Pocahontas." The attestation of the Major's claim to inherited virtues was a telling stroke in behalf of the accused. The Major's case was gaining ground.

"He belongs to our Chapter of the Sons of the Revolution, and the Judge would dislike so much to wound him!" broke in Mrs. Chatterton. "Of course," commiseratingly, "any adverse action on our part would be most humiliating to him, poor fellow."

The best they would make of the case was bad enough. Undoubtedly the blame rested entirely on the vile representation of their own sex, but if she fell the Major would also suffer irretrievable disgrace. Taking all things into consideration these impartial, tender-hearted women could really see but one course to pursue—they must overcome their personal aversions because of the Major's ancestral record, and thus the refuge of the Major's wife would be within the shadow of a great name.

Not many juries would have shown such unbiased judgments—such unparalleled discretion. But this congress which had convened was an eminently trustworthy authority upon estimates.

CHAPTER IX.

MARGARET'S VISIT.

MRS. LANSDOWNE and her daughters had hoped almost against hope that something would develop to keep their relative from making her proposed visit to them. As day after day passed and no further word came, they had begun to take fresh courage, when one bright October morning a second note was received from Pearl. It was brief and to the point: She would be with them on the following day. The sword of Damocles had fallen.

That day having arrived, Mrs. Lansdowne but a few minutes since had sent her brother-in-law's phaeton to convey their unwelcome guest from the station to Beechdale. Certainly if it had been a funeral faces hardly more solemn would have appeared about the breakfast board that morning. The train was due at West Hill Station at nine thirty-five. If on time Pearl would be with the family by ten.

Maud seemed to be the only one that manifested any particular interest in their guest's arrival. She stood at the library window, her expectant gaze fixed on that point of the road where a gentle ascent would bring any vehicle in view. The others

sat around in dull, apathetic state, making no comments and offering each other no consolation.

"Here she is, mamma! Here she is!" screamed Maud. "See, that is the phaeton! Katheryn said she would have on calico, but she hasn't! I can see. I think it's blue cloth, and O! she has a hat to match, with red flowers like mine. She has gloves, too, Katheryn. She just put her hand up. I wonder if they're kid."

"Mamma," cried Katheryn, exasperated beyond measure, "I wish to heaven you would stop Maud's mouth. Talk about our being disgraced! I think she will be quite equal to her cousin in humiliating us if she isn't locked up in a convent pretty soon."

"Maud," shrieked Mrs. Lansdowne, "come away from there! Let me hear another word from you except when you are addressed, and I will see Father Frohmann tomorrow."

If there was anything that could effectually quiet Maud Lansdowne for a time at least, it was the awful possibility that her mother might some time be as good as her word. That she might be shut in before she was "out" was a constant menace to future happiness.

Maud pointed and bounced her one hundred and thirty pounds avoirdupois into a wicker chair near the window. Katheryn went over to where her youngest sister had been standing.

"Yes, here she is!" she reported, craning her neck a little as the phaeton rolled up to the door.

Mrs. Lansdowns arose. "O, girls, I hope you will treat her with common decency," she said imploringly. "Remember, she is my dead sister's child, and—and—" Mrs. Lansdowne's feelings were getting the better of her.

"Don't grow sentimental, mamma!" interrupted Yzabel. "I do not suppose you feel any more like weeping than we do. It isn't at all likely we will forget our manners. There's the bell."

Betty, who was never in haste to respond to the bell, was on the alert this morning. The servants had heard enough to make the new arrival a source of great interest to them. Betty was eager to carry a description of Mrs. Lansdowne's country relative to the cook; likewise she was eager for the coachman's report of the young stranger.

Mrs. Lansdowne hushed away with her embroidered handkerchief the few tears that had been extracted from her pale blue eyes during her recent agitation, then stepped to the library door to receive her niece.

"My dear, I am inexpressibly glad to see you again," said Mrs. Lansdowne, as she extended her right foot an eighth of an inch beyond the entrance and smiled languidly on the girl who stood before her. "These are your cousins, dear. This is Katheryn, the eldest, and Yzabel, just your age, I believe, and Elinoir, who expects to be 'out' this winter, and Maud—Maud, come here, child, and greet your cousin."

The girls gave Pearl a little icy kiss, each of them, and murmured something about feeling happy to make their cousin's acquaintance. Then they invited her to be seated and rest a few moments before going up to her room.

Mrs. Lansdowne began questioning on home affairs, but her daughters, beyond putting in a word now and then, spent the time in attempting to fathom the character and disposition of the girl before them. They realized now that it was no longer *concerning*, but *with* their cousin they had to do.

They saw before them a young woman, slightly above medium height, figure firmly knit and graceful; hair, brown; complexion as if touched by the rich, deep glow of an autumn sunset; lips full, curved and healthful in their color; nose fairly well shaped, yet by no means of classic perfection; contour of the face perhaps too round to be "Madonna" like in its outlines; eyes—ah! these were not so easy to characterize. Such eyes would be an artist's torment. They might be brown, they might be hazel, they might be gray, and they might be even black, they might at times be readable and they might again be absolutely inscrutable. They were wonderfully expressive eyes. Those whom Pearl Stewart loved might thrill before their glance; those whose lives she would condemn might blanche and quail to meet the fires of their artillery.

That she could be termed pretty, perhaps even

handsome, was mentally agreed upon by the Lansdowne family. They were not quite willing, however, to give this as their permanent opinion. Hers was pre-eminently a beauty of perfect health, of fine intelligence, and it is not easy to estimate this type.

Elinoir soon invited her cousin upstairs to the room which she was to occupy during her stay at Beechdale. "Perhaps you would like to rest awhile before going down again, Margaret," she said, quite pleasantly. "I presume you are fatigued after your trip. Such an out of the way route! You had to change at Rainford at four o'clock, I believe."

"O, yes, but I didn't mind that at all," replied her cousin brightly. "I am used to rising rather early —never later than six. O, no, I am not tired in the least. I could do the same thing over several times and not feel much the worse for the exertion. I am hopelessly healthy, you see. By the way, Elinoir, you called me 'Margaret'; did you think—?"

Elinoir interrupted her, while a little flush colored her usually pale cheek.

"I had a friend once," she said, looking down a little sadly. "Her name was Pearl, and"—(choking)—

"O, I see," answered Pearl, grasping the situation with sympathetic quickness. "You lost her, perhaps, and you do not care to hear the name."

"Yes," in relieved tones, "exactly, and mamma thought since 'Pearl' is only a nickname for 'Mar-

garet' anyway, it might not be displeasing to you."

"Certainly not," rejoined the other. "I would not desire to give you unnecessary pain. Call me 'Margaret' if you wish."

"You are very kind!" answered Elinoir, with something more of genuine good will in her tones than Pearl had heard since her arrival.

"Perhaps, though, your name is 'Margaret,' and you were called 'Pearl' for short. That used to be the way, you know," Elinoir rattled on in unwise elucidation. "Now, when we were little, mamma called us Kitty and Bell and Ella. Of course such names now are horribly 'out.' Only quite ordinary people impose them on their children."

Suddenly Elinoir thought her cousin's eyes looked black as they were turned upon her. She felt uneasy at their steady gaze and allowed her own to fall.

"The only significance which a name has for us, after all, is its associational relations, I think," said Pearl earnestly. "In spite of my name being passé it is a very precious one to me. Mother called me so, because I was, she used to say, a priceless jewel to her. The name meant much to her; therefore it means much, very much to me; but I think, Elinoir, I would rather be 'Margaret' to you, if you wish it."

The steady eyes were looking at her still. Elinoir, for perhaps the first time in her life, felt a sensation somewhat akin to shame. It was cer-

tainly the first time she had come in contact with a nature so noble and sincere. Naturally her own seemed suddenly shrunken and deformed in comparison. She felt no inclination to continue the *tete a tete,* so she said, "When you are ready, Margaret, come right down to the library. Make yourself perfectly at home." Then she smiled and nodded pleasantly and left the room. She was thankful to get away from those accusing eyes. They seemed to follow her even out in the hallway, like the eyes in a portrait which she had once seen.

She fled to the room below in such agitation of spirit and speech as to cause instant consternation among the other members of the family.

"What on earth is the matter, Elinoir," cried Yzabel, looking at her sister, wild-eyed and flushed.

"O, I've—her name you know—I must tell you —quick—before she comes down! I invented the best story you ever heard. Just literally fell into luck!" panted Elinoir.

"Sit down child! What are you trying to tell?" asked her mother.

Elinoir's excitement began to calm itself, and she tried hard to collect her scattered wits sufficiently to give an intelligible account of herself.

"I concluded to make hay while the sun shone. so I quite naturally, you know, addressed her as 'Margaret.' I am so sorry," regretfully, "that I didn't say Marguerite, but I didn't, so there's an end of it. At first I rather thought she had not

noticed my little slip of the tongue, but she did. She asked me rather suddenly why I had called her so. In just a second a nice story popped into my head—it must have been pure and unadulterated inspiration. I told her I had a friend once whose name was Pearl, and then while deciding whether this friend was dead or false, she saved me the trouble, dear, little pigeon, by saying, 'O, yes, I see—and—she is dead. It makes you feel sad to hear her name mentioned.' Then, you see, I had my cue. I was ready to burst with laughter, actually! I thanked her very much for her consideration and went on saying something about nicknames—I'm awfully afraid, though, I made a jumble out of this—I don't remember clearly what I did say now, but all at once her eyes had such a queer look in them, it brought me to my senses. They seemed to pierce right down—down into me. I felt about as large as a minikin. She answered something, I can't remember what, only that she said herself she would rather be called 'Margaret.' It's over now, and you can't say, mamma, that I never know what to answer at the right time, can you?"

"No, my dear, I think you did quite well on this occasion. When you learn to be as politic as your mother and Katheryn, Elinoir, I will not worry," replied Mrs. Lansdowne, in a tone commendatory of her daughter's rapid progress along the line of social expediencies. "The trouble with both you

and Yzabel," broke in Katheryn, suddenly inflated and moved by her mother's compliment to give instructions, "is that after you have told your story you will never let 'well enough' alone. You dash on in your attempt to make things more plausible and consequently get mixed up in your own web. When you have said your little speech, stop short! It's the rambler that arouses suspicion; remember that."

Elinoir took without comment this bit of wise counsel from her eldest sister, but Yzabel, considering her abilities had been unjustly attacked, remarked sarcastically:

"When we have told as many of those 'advantageous truths' as you have, Katheryn, we will be quite equal to you. Pray, have no fear. We have not been practicing long enough, my dear."

A little embryotic breeze was suddenly quelled by the sound of Margaret's light, quick step on the stair. Mrs. Lansdowne arose as her niece came into the room. "Do you feel refreshed, dear?" she asked, looking critically into the girl's blooming face. "I am afraid you did not rest long enough. I'll ring for Betty to bring us some claret. We are a little exhausted ourselves this morning. The girls were out very late last night at the Poker Club, and I, of course, could not sleep till they were in. A mother never can, you know."

Betty appeared at the door. "Claret and wafers, Betty," ordered Mrs. Lansdowne. Then, address-

ing her niece, "it is so stimulating. It will make you feel quite yourself again, I am sure."

A clear, rippling little laugh broke forth from the girl's throat as naturally as the song from a woodland warbler. It was as refreshing to hear as the waters of a cascade.

"Why, Aunt Frances," she exclaimed, "you are so entirely mistaken in thinking I am in the least weary. Indeed," looking longingly out of the window opposite her, "nothing would give me greater pleasure than to take a walk this instant over those beautiful slopes yonder. You forget I am a country girl."

Her regal, strong, young frame seemed as it stood sharply outlined against the filmy whiteness of the curtains, a very Juno. It was a contrast to the frail, slender figures of the Misses Lansdowne.

Yes, they had really overlooked for the moment that she was their "country cousin."

CHAPTER X.

GETTING INTO SOCIETY.

AFTER luncheon the family went to their respective rooms, and Margaret was again subjected to the ordeal of taking several hours' unneeded "rest." She had indeed ventured to suggest a short ramble by herself, but the idea brought such an instant look of horror on the faces of her cousins that though she did not understand in what way she had offended she quickly gave up the project.

Dinner was served at six. Maud was sent upstairs at eight, presumably for the purpose of retiring. Margaret soon after, having occasion to go to her room, heard hushed voices on a rear porch extending to one window of her room, when she glanced out she thought she recognized her young cousin with several companions, and all were seemingly having a much gayer time than the young ladies in the library.

When Margaret returned below, the party there, she could see from the stairs, had been augmented by a young man. The evening that had promised to be of insufferable dullness for at least three of the young people was now suddenly filled with pleasurable anticipations.

Elinoir, when she heard Margaret coming, rushed out into the hall to meet her and to impart the news of the advent of their neighbor, Fletcher Chatterton, who had the enviable reputation of affording bushels of fun wherever he went. Margaret, on being introduced, strangely enough, retained perfect presence of mind, though before a representative of the Beechdale elect, and she was enabled to take him in, perhaps even more comprehensively than he did her.

He was of nondescript color and wore a suit, perhaps with a view of matching his hair and complexion. His hands were small for a man, but indicative, no doubt of a noble ancestry, and he wore on the little finger of his left hand a heavy gold ring, in which was embedded a flashing diamond. His mouth was much too large for good looks, however suited it might be to other purposes, but its ill proportion was made less noticeable by a heavy blond mustache artistically curled and carefully trained upward at the ends, thus making what might ahve been a disastrous homeliness of slight consequence in the *summum totum* of his personal appearance.

Margaret could not determine just how the gentleman particularly merited Elinoir's enconium unless the constant and amazing exercise of his cachinnatory powers could be construed as the "bushels of fun" that Mr. Chatterton was accustomed to donate.

"And, so this is your cousin, Miss Katheryn, of whom you were speaking last evening—or this morning would be more accurate, would it not? He-he-he-he! Well, I am delighted to meet you. Miss Stewart! Indeed I am! He-he-he-he! Always glad to welcome a nice girl. He-he-Pardonnez-moi, Miss Katheryn! Really that was no libel on the fair ones already here! We love you all! He-he-he-he-he! But you see, Miss Stewart, we can take in a few more—if they're good looking. We only take in the good looking ones, mind you. Isn't that so, Miss Yzabel?"

"O, Mr. Chatterton, how insincere you men are. I don't believe you care a fig for anyone of us," replied Yzabel, with a melting glance.

"How can you, Miss Yzabel! How can you be so cruel? Don't you remember what I told *you* last night? He-he-he-he!"

"What was that, Mr. Chatterton? Do tell *me*," cried Elinoir, in an alarmed tone from her seat on the piano stool. "What did you tell her?"

"Shall I, Miss Yzabel?"

"If you want to," answered that young person, with perfect *sang froid.*

"Don't be jealous, now, any of you," with a sweeping glance, which also included Margaret.

"You know that bewitching dress Miss Yzabel wore at Mrs. Pierson's? Mrs. Pierson entertained the Poker Club in swell fashion last night, Miss

Stewart. You play that fascinating game, of course?"

"No, Mr. Chatterton, I will have to plead ignorance there."

It was really a relief to hear the sound of her own voice. It had been the first opportunity to demonstrate her powers of speech. Mr. Chatterton looked a full second in pitying and silent amazement on the representation of such self-confessed ignorance. Then he took up the thread of his previous discussion.

"Well, I said—yes, I did; I couldn't help it, really I couldn't! He! he! he! he! I said—her arms were pretty enough to kiss!" with a climatic burst of gallantry. "They were surely, Miss Stewart, what one could see of them! He! he! he! he!"

A chorus of laughs followed which lasted—at intervals—for fully five minutes. Margaret turned with bored expression plainly visible on her features to see how her aunt was appreciating the conversation, but Mrs. Lansdowne had at this critical juncture discreetly withdrawn, leaving the young folks to enjoy themselves alone.

She longed to rush to her own room and to give vent to her feelings. She almost hated the prattling fool before her who seemed never wearied of his own vocal reverberations. She could not but entertain the utmost contempt for those who could sit tranquilly and, doubtless, for an indefinite time, listening to such nauseating flattery. Then Mr.

Chatterton asked Katheryn to sing, and the invitation was accepted with alacrity. For the next hour Katheryn was aiming at the heart of Mr. Chatterton with all the darts which "Midsummer Dreams" and "I Love Thee," and others of like sentiment could produce. Mr. Chatterton, whenever the way was clear, showed his appreciation of the poet's thoughts by sending silent little tokens of the grand passion to Elinoir and Yzabel.

Eleven struck at last. Margaret had a wild desire to try the efficacy of mental suggestion to rid herself of this animated incubus. She was saved the trouble, however, as Mr. Chatterton concluded of his own volition to bring his call to a close.

"Miss Stewart," he said, extending curved fingers to Margaret and giving hers the approved ultra-fashionable oscillation, "I shall certainly tell my sisters what an addition has been made to Beechdale in your coming to us. We are very exclusive here. We don't take everybody in, you know. He! he! he! he! he!"

"So I am to consider it a great honor, Mr. Chatterton," she observed. Even poor Chatterton thought he detected a disdainful smile curling her lips for an instant. He was just a little disconcerted at first as to how to answer; he tried to get his bearings.

"Yes, yes, a great honor!" They heard a few little warbles even from the hall where he was getting his hat and gold-headed cane.

"Isn't he jolly?" asked Elinoir *soto voce*. "The girls are all just wild after him. They'd give their heads to get him."

"Would they?" returned Margaret abstractedly.

CHAPTER XI.

DAILY HAPPENINGS.

THE next morning broke cool and clear over Beechdale. Margaret breathed in the redolent air with the delight of an exile returning to pleasures long lost. To her, wherever nature thrilled, it was the same yesterday, today, and forever. Although it was an early hour she felt quite incapable of alluring herself again to the land of dreams, and after dressing she sat down by a window to drink in at leisure the charms of a new-born day which had not yet lost the impress of dawn's rosy fingers.

The rising bell rang at eight and Margaret was thankful for the coffee and fruit that Betty brought to her room. So healthful a constitution as hers craved something rather more substantial than early-morning reveries.

Katheryn did not appear at the breakfast table. She was suffering from headache and both Yzabel and Elinoir looked jaded.

"Did you have a good night's rest?" inquired Mrs. Lansdowne of her niece with appreciable concern in her tones.

"A most refreshing one, though my rest was not so long as yours, I think. I was awake at six and

enjoyed a delightful hour or so by the window. I think there are such exquisite views from my window."

"Do you, dear?" answered Mrs. Lansdowne, with a little yawn. "Beechdale is a very beautiful place, people think (reflectively). But, my dear, you surely cannot always indulge in such early hours. I presume it is caused by being in a strange place. I am often affected that way myself. I am sorry you waked so early."

"O, feel no sorrow on that account. I think it a privilege to rise early. One misses quite the most beautiful part of the day by remaining in bed till eight. I would never wish to do that, really."

"Gracious!" broke in Elinoir, "how can you ever kill time in that way? I would simply expire if the days were so interminable. It would seem ages till evening. The men never drop in till so late, you know. They are monstrously lazy beings."

"Kill time!" echoed Margaret. "Why, it seems to me that before I do half I should do and indeed that I want to do, the day is gone."

Yzabel looked at her cousin with a compassionate smile on her face. Really, argument with such rare simplicity was obviously futile, and Yzabel forebore. Elinoir, however, never willing any subject should be dropped without being brought to a satisfactory issue, went on with the discussion.

"Why, society people all do that way. You see after one is 'out' there are such streams of engage-

ments, one has to take care of one's self. Why, there are—"

"Girls, do quit talking for a moment," pleaded Mrs. Lansdowne, from behind her paper. "Here is a notice about Elinoir." There was instant attention.

"Miss Elinoir Lansdowne, niece of Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne, and one of the sweet, young buds of the coming winter, was very much admired at Bar Harbor this season, and it is said this charming Dulcinea wears several of Cupid's trophies on her girdle. Miss Elinoir graduated this year from Miss Graymore's fashionable school at Chilborne. She had the honor of special mention among those of the senior class."

"Well," queried Mrs. Lansdowne, "how do you suppose these things get into the paper and what would reporters do if they could not pull us society people to pieces. They are veritable private detectives. It is really quite provoking to have one's name so constantly before the public in this way."

"Yes, I should feel quite annoyed, too, Aunt Frances," remarked Margaret; "and how do they manage to get all such information?" Mrs. Lansdowne eyed her niece a little sharply.

"Heaven knows, my dear! There are hundreds of ways. Perhaps the item has been copied from a Chilborne paper and embellished. It is very irritating, certainly!" Then the conversation was quickly turned to less dangerous channels.

"Maud," said Mrs. Lansdowne after breakfast, "hurry, love, and Elinoir will drive you to school this morning. She has to go to Madame Renaud about her dress. Margaret, would you like to take a drive, dear?" Margaret with alacrity answered in the affirmative, though, in truth, she felt like a caged bird and would have preferred to walk.

"What time does your school open?" asked Margaret.

"Quarter past nine," drawled Maud. "I go to a private school, you know—Miss Huntington's. It used to begin at nine, but the public school opens then and most of the girls' mothers didn't want them to go till after the crowd had passed. Public school children are so rough and use such awful language."

"Are your public schools good here?" inquired Margaret of her aunt.

"O, yes, quite up to the standard, I presume; but they push them so outrageously. Dr. Winthrop says all my children are of such nervous temperaments they could never in the world stand it to go through. Maud looks well," apologetically, "but she isn't. Dr. Winthrop says," (Mrs. Lansdowne with maternal prudence lowered her voice) "that Maud's brain is entirely too active and that she should not be pushed under any circumstances. I have to watch her very carefully. Maud, love, have you your rubbers."

"Yes," replied that delicate young person. "Betty

hunted them up for me. It made my head dizzy to look so much." In spite of precaution to guard the secret, Maud doubtless was aware of the precarious condition of her brain.

The phaeton had now come to the door. The three started off and after leaving Maud at Miss Huntington's and stopping a few moments at Madame Renaud's, Elinor drove around the little hamlet, that she might point out the elegant mansions to Margaret and identify them with the various magnates of Beechdale.

They approached a large, grey stone, situated far back from the entrance gate and almost concealed by the beautiful autumn-tinted trees. "That is a beautiful place," observed Margaret.

"It is rather pretty, though it is a little too shady to be artistic. It is the old Glover place. The family are travelling in Europe for Mr. Glover's health. Poor man! He was one of the wealthiest merchants in Beechdale before he failed. The house is leased now to Major Dearborne. The Major just married this summer and—" Elinor did not conclude her sentence for just then out of the gate rolled an elegant rockaway in which was seated a lady whom Elinoir announced as Mrs. Dearborne.

The occupants of the two vehicles were soon within speaking distance of each other.

"Miss Elinoir, is that your cousin?" inquired Mrs. Dearborne in a soft, musical voice with the slightest and most charming of foreign accents. "I

heard only yesterday that she was expected."

"Yes; Margaret, this is Mrs. Dearborne. Miss Stewart, Mrs. Dearborne. My cousin was just admiring your place as you came out."

"It is a beautiful spot," said Margaret. "The trees are so grand. The scenery around here is magnificent." "So? I am delighted you are pleased. I want to say, Miss Elinoir, that I was going over this very moment to make you a morning call. Just a little 'drop in.' You have been all so kind to me—a stranger. I appreciate it. I love you!" There were sparkling tears in Mrs. Dearborne's soft eyes. "But never mind, dear, do not shorten your drive. I will come over about half-past four tomorrow afternoon. That is too early? No? I will not surely steal you from your nap?"

"We will be charmed to see you then," replied Elinoir graciously.

"I will not forget. Miss Stewart, I am truly so happy to have met you." There was cast upon Margaret a soulful, bewitching smile, and Margaret responded:

"I am sure, Mrs. Dearborne, I will be pleased to see you again so soon."

The little lady smiled back an acknowledgment, kissed her daintly gloved hand to Margaret and Elinoir and was soon being driven rapidly down the avenue.

"What a very fascinating woman!" was Margar-

et's impulsive comment. "You say she is a foreigner?

"O, yes, you can easily detect that from her accent. She is German; but she speaks English quite well. She is very highly educated, they say. Major Dearborne married her a few months ago at Heidelberg."

"Then she is only just come to America?"

"O, I cannot tell, really, just how long she has lived here; quite a number of years, I think. The major first met here here." Elinoir was fearful that she might divulge too much of the major's private affairs. She felt she was jumbling matters even now. She wisely turned the conversation into broader channels and kept it there during the rest of the drive.

While Margaret was in her room after her return Mrs. Lansdowne gave her daughters some good advice.

"I want to say that it would be best, I think, not to speak of the rumors afloat concerning Major Dearborne and his wife. The truth cannot be proved by us, you know. If Margaret knows of the affair, however, I am sure that she would have nothing more to do with Mrs. Dearborne. It would make things uncomfortable for us. The girl hasn't an atom of allowance. It is indeed difficult to find where some people have their Christianity stored away."

"Just what I thought," announced Elinoir with a

smile of satisfaction on her face, "and that is precisely the reason I did not tell her more than I did about the major and his wife. She is quite favorably impressed with her now, I think."

"You used great discretion, my dear," replied Mrs. Lansdowne commendably.

"It is my opinion that we will need a goodly number of secret sessions to keep affairs straight," observed Katheryn, wisely. "Things must have a pretty genuine appearance to meet her approbation."

There was gradually forming in the minds of the members of the Lansdowne family the conception that Margaret's moral pre-judgments might be, perhaps, far worse to do battle with than her rustic blunders.

CHAPTER XII.

AS SOCIETY SEES IT.

MAJOR DEARBORNE and his wife sat in their drawing-room. The faces of both wore a look of expectancy, hers eager, sanguine, his nervous, apprehensive. The Major glanced at his watch (the third time within five minutes.)

"You need have no fears, my dear major," observed his wife. As she spoke she glanced at her graceful figure in the long mirror at the end of the room. "They will probably not be here much before nine." Then she arose from her chair and walked down the long room. The Major looked after her admiringly.

Mrs. Dearborne was beautiful, men said, and are they not judges? But it was certainly a beauty existing in activity alone. When in repose, though this was very rare, her face wore the stolid, expressionless look which marks Teutonic extraction; and her very form at such times seemed suddenly to lose its beauty of contour and become the inert clay. But the sylphic motion which had set frequenters of the famous Altenberg wild, could charm in the drawing-room as well; the graceful poise of the head, the control of every movement, the fairy step, the expressive face that, with Protean skill

mirrored a thousand emotions at will, made up a most fascinating personality. Tonight she wore a black costume of some sheer, Oriental weave, embroidered in gleaming beetle's wings, and her sparkling eyes seemed to have caught the very hue of her spangled gown.

She came and settled back into her chair again with a complacent smile. There was every reason, she felt, to be satisfied with the world in general and herself in particular, for she was about to make her initial bow to Beechdale society.

On her first acquaintance with Mrs. Lansdowne's niece her wit had suggested that in the girl might be found the rescuer who should draw her from the dangerous shoals of calumny to the firm and solid foundations of the *haut monde*. Through her she might try the fluctuating pulse of Beechdale.

She began to plan then and there and tonight would decide if it were a losing game she had played: Margaret Stewart her guest of honor; a few of Beechdale's choicest spirits bidden to celebrate the event.

She looked amusedly at the Major's fingers toying nervously with his black silk guard. "You know Mrs. Chatterton's daughters, my dear? Well, I went there first after Miss Stewart had accepted, to sound them. They pretended to be delighted to come, pleased to be so honored. Ha! ha! ha! My way was easy then. All I needed to say after that was that Miss Chatterton and her sister

would be here and my invitation was accepted. Ach! they follow like a flock of sheep. It was fun to see the fools and I, Fraulien Hilda, leading them!" The memory of it all quite overcame her. She clapped her hands in an abandonment of mirth. The Major looked uneasily toward an open door beyond and frowned. He caught the fleeting vision of a servant's vanishing head. She did not heed the look, nor yet the frown. "But the best—the very best, my dear, is yet to tell. That little country chit with her big eyes looking through you. O, you should have seen her—how I won her—"

"There, a carriage!" cried the Major, in the seventh heaven of delight and cutting off in his excitement, Mrs. Major's ecstacies.

"You're a brick, my love—I've told you that before, I think—you've brought 'em!"

The first arrivals proved to be the honored guest and two of her cousins with Mr. Chatterton. Katheryn was coming later with Mr. Boskin. By nine the Major felt that he was monarch of all he surveyed and winked confidentially at his wife as she floated past him. The drawing-room and spacious halls were echoing to the laughter of "fair women and brave men." Soon they began to wander off to little nooks and cozy corners where they could coo away quite unmolested.

Then at last Margaret herself was free to move about the rooms; the Major came toward her with Mr. Nelson Boskin, Katheryn's escort. Katheryn

was enjoying a *tete a tete* with the Reverend Harcourt. Mr. Boskin was a large, rather pompous-looking young man with fierce moustache and with a propensity for keeping up a perpetual jingle with one hand or the other in his trousers' pockets. He carried her off immediately to the hall, where a number were congregated about the cheering bowl.

"Allow me, Miss Stewart—it's beastly hot in here—to offer you a cooling draught," said Mr. Boskin in his best style. "A little lemonade—*a la* Dearborne, I suppose!" The room was intensely warm, the offer a welcome one. She reached her hand for the dainty cup, filled with its frothy liquid. When she had drunken the contents she turned to place the glass on the table, but Mr. Boskin was not to be found napping as to politeness.

"Another, Miss Stewart? Pardon my neglect. I was just speaking here to your cousin. I did not notice you had finished. A thousand pardons!" Mr. Boskin lifted the sparkling ladle to serve her. She raised a detaining hand. "Thank you, no. Mr. Boskin—no more."

"Mr. Boskin, I am afraid my cousin is not fully initiated as yet into the mysteries of Bacchus." It was Katheryn's voice, accompanied by a little, low mocking laugh. "Just fill this one for me, will you? My sixth glass! I drank four with the rector!" Mr. Boskin discharged the duty with alacrity and then performed a like service for himself. Suddenly

he looked at Margaret and then he broke into a seemingly uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"A teetotaler, Miss Stewart? I beg a thousand pardons for not being responsible for the strength of this—ah—beverage." The tone of his voice and the veiled sarcasm beneath his words angered her.

"I have not called you to account that I know of, Mr. Boskin; it is quite needless to beg my pardon," she replied a little stiffly. Mr. Boskin did not seem at all affected by the rebuke, but continued: "Miss Stewart, I am sure you want to know how such confoundedly hot stuff was ever supposed to make one cool. I declare I can't myself crack that nut. I have better knack in filling glasses, you see —your seventh, Miss Lansdowne—than solving riddles. My education is a little deficient there. Here's Mr. Douglass, though—he has seemed to be more interested in this conversation than with the major's punch—perhaps he can come to our rescue. Won't you have a glass, Douglass? No? Why, man alive, you don't mean to say that you have sworn off, this early in the evening! You'll go home disgracefully sober if you keep that up, won't he, Miss Lansdowne? Now, look here, Douglass, while I have my senses clear, I want to propound Miss Stewart's riddle—did you hear it, by the way? You were standing right there." Mr. Boskin drained another cup of punch at a single draught and began jingling in his pocket for diversion. "Perhaps Miss Stewart would be able to solve the

enigma herself, if she were out of this crush," answered Douglass. A look of intense relief and inexpressible gratitude passed over Margaret's face. He saw it. With only the slightest apology to Boskin for carrying off his lady in so unceremonious a fashion, Douglass touched Margaret's arm and turned with her toward the music room.

"Would you like to take a peep at the art room, Miss Stewart?" he asked. "The Major has quite a fine collection of pictures, I hear, picked up abroad."

"O, I would be so delighted," she answered in relieved tones. "My cousin told me about them. I was afraid I would miss the opportunity."

"You might have done so had I not carried you off so unceremoniously. I presume I was rude, but you didn't seem to be enjoying yourself there. I dislike to see people miserable. Philosophers tell us that sympathy is only a form of selfishness, after all; I have a feeling they are right somehow." She raised two dark eyes to his and there was more real, honest pleasure in their depths than had been there before that evening.

"I'm sure I was glad for the relief offered," she said, candidly. "I was intensely bored."

"You have not had much to do with Vanity Fair, have you?" he asked.

In spite of that little derisory smile that seemed so a part of this man, there was a pleasant echo of sincerity in his voice which at once made Margaret

feel at ease in his presence. She could not believe that he was amusing himself with her evident inexperience in the ways of high society. It was as though she had found one to whom she could speak out her heart.

"I hope I am mistaken in my inference of your meaning, Mr. Douglass. I do not want to believe we are within miles of Vanity Fair."

She looked at him expectantly, but there was no sign that he intended to qualify his statement. The same bantering smile rested in his eyes. "I am awfully sorry, believe me, to shatter your innocent dreams," he said a little regretfully, "but before you go tonight, if you are willing to see it, I think perhaps you will be ready to acknowledge that Vanity Fair is about you. We poor creatures brought up in this tinselled structure cannot be deceived."

They had stopped before a landscape of rare beauty. It caught Margaret's eye. The appreciative expression on his companion's face did not escape Douglass. He stepped closer.

"By the distinguished comedian, Joseph Jefferson," he remarked. "Do you call it a fine piece of work?"

"I should not think myself competent to judge as to its value except that landscapes are my specialty; not that I am an artist, however, but because I feel so at home with nature. I should say that such a work as this could come only from the brush of one who has the broadest sympathy with her.

I think often we are conscious of the magnetic power of a work and yet have no technical knowledge in regard to it; do you not think this is so? I believe I was born with a passion for woods and streams. Intuitively I know whether the artist loves them too; especially am I susceptible to his subtle power now that I am in a measure an exile." There was a half-proud, half-challenging smile on her face at the last words. If Douglass interpreted it he did not give any outward sign.

"I confess that I have never thought of criticism apart from technical knowledge," he said. "I think the test of value as you present it might well hold a higher place when compared with mere analytic judgment; but such critics, I am afraid, would be rare and hard to find."

"I do not agree with you, Mr. Douglass," she replied, shaking her head. "This is the trouble—the world does not want to find them."

He laughed. "I raise the white flag of truce," he said, picking up her filmy handkerchief at his feet. "And, by the by, Miss Stewart, we were speaking of Vanity Fair—what do you think of its author?" He was curious to know what this girl, so appreciative of art, had to say of literature. "I swear by Thackeray, so I can seldom see his faults. One is likely to fall into such little weakness when rating one's friends."

"Yes, it is natural, I believe; but I cannot quite say Thackeray claims the highest place in my affec-

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tions, Mr. Douglass," she replied. "He is an inimitable writer and I enjoy him immensely; yet whenever I read him I always have the impression that only one side of his nature was really ever developed. He sits too continually as the stern judge. He becomes at last, I think, the misanthrope that believes all the world a rogue. One easily influenced in his opinions, and reading Thackeray, might come to the conclusion, quite naturally, too, I think, that all true worth had perished from the earth. Of what avail is it to pour into the gilded palace of Vanity Fair the penetrating light of cynicism; to let us see all the sham of its glitter; to reveal the skeletons hidden away in every nook and then, when we would flee from it all, horrified and bewildered, crying, 'Where is there any truth?' be answered by the mockery of silence? The pen is a wonderful power, but it can never fulfill its mission until it depicts the noble as well as the base—the base as well as the noble—and no writer has attained his most potent influence until he has wielded such a pen."

In her ardor she quite forgot all else except that she was talking to one who felt with her. She was certain that this tall, handsome, distinguished-looking man at her side was somehow no more in sympathy with much that was going on around than was she herself.

They had reached while talking a small alcove and stood there, half concealed by the beautiful

statuary and stately palms within the recess. They made a pretty picture to any one caring to look; Margaret,—her hands clasped tightly together in her earnestness, her eyes so guiltless of any glance of coquetry, looking steadily at Douglass; he,—listening to her with intense admiration visible on his face; but the tableau was spoiled in another instant.

"Oh, here you are! You must be very industrious people to have gotten the rounds so soon," observed a feminine voice. Margaret and Douglass started as if rudely awakened from a dream. Turning, they saw Miss Chatterton clinging confidingly to the arm of her escort, the Reverend Dr. Harcourt.

The clergyman, though on the shady side of forty, was eligible for gatherings of all ages.

Gossip had it that the Reverend gentleman, during his previous incumbency, was so besieged for his heart and hand as to make life almost worthless from a clerical standpoint. Every look, every smile, though given in the capacity of his holy office, was interpreted as pointing to something far more serious; whereupon, countless trousseaus were planned, dreams dreamed and visions indulged in. In the midst of his dilemma came the urgent call from "The Holy Angels."

The Church of the Holy Angels was at the time in a state of perplexity as great as that of the Reverend Harcourt. Unfortunately, their former pas-

tor had not been the man for the place. His people outgrew their straitened paths and when they climbed to higher altitudes of crucifixes and of candles, the pastor, bewildered, halted on the plains below. The shepherdless flock floated about for a while in imminent danger of gospel starvation unless a man of broader parts might be found who was able to dispense to them ceremonial formularies and incidentally the Bread of Life. They heard of the Reverend Harcourt. He was high and broad and altogether of the most approved proportions. The call was loud and the Reverend Harcourt heard. Whether he found Cupid less persistent in his new field, he alone could say. Certain it was that he was a welcome adjunct to "little informals" or to a "social crush."

Douglass was the first to respond to Miss Chatterton's little sally.

"I am afraid Miss Stewart and myself can not claim the diligence which you so generously ascribe to us. We have been idling away our time—perhaps I should not say idling, though—in discussing Vanity Fair and Thackeray; sort of debate, you know, with Miss Stewart on the winning side."

"O, I am afraid I have given Mr. Douglass very little chance to express his opinions. I have done all the talking myself." She looked distressed over the enormity of such transgression. Douglass hastened to reassure her.

"Miss Stewart, lose no sleep tonight on that

score." Then, in a slightly lowered tone and as if heedless of the others at his side, he added: "I have found this the most refreshing half hour I am able to call to mind for many a long day. Shall we make an attempt to look at some of the paintings over here?"

"I am afraid, Mr. Douglass, you will miss one of the treats of the evening if you do. Major Dearborne's art collection is most fascinating, but Mrs. Lawrence's voice is divine," volunteered Dr. Harcourt, addressing Douglass, but letting an admiring glance rest upon Margaret. "I fear you will be in a strait betwixt, too, if you do not either veil your eyes or stop your ears."

Whatever Douglass might have felt personally in the matter, Margaret took the initiative.

"O, is there to be singing?" she exclaimed delightedly. "I am sure we would not wish to miss that, would we, Mr. Douglass? There is nothing I love better than to hear a beautiful voice."

"Where is the singing to be, Dr. Harcourt?"

"In the east wing, on the other side of the drawing-room, I believe."

Just then the major's wife came toward them, holding out both jewelled little hands toward Margaret and giving utterance to all the delight consequent upon meeting a friend after a year's absence.

"Ah, Fraulien, *wie grausam*—how cruel! *bist du gervesen?* I have been an hour trying to find *meine Margarethe.* I was afraid the woodland daisy had

hidden herself from the glare of the hot house. But you have been with Mr. Douglass? So? I should have breathed easily had I known it!" Mrs. Major looked so innocent, so distressed, so altogether adorably childish, as she clasped Margaret's hands in her own that the girl utterly missed the ludicrousness in the avowal that Mrs. Dearborne had for a whole hour so vainly sought within the confines of her own house for one of her guests.

"Sorry, Mrs. Dearborne, you didn't happen to think of the art room. We have only just now wandered away from there," said Douglass, a suggestive smile in his blue eyes.

"Yes, how stupid!" she said petulantly; "and now, Mr. Douglass, will you kindly take Miss Stewart to the east room? Mrs. Lawrence has consented to give us some music. I must see whether there are not others in the art room. Take care of Mr. Douglass, my dear. Ah! I know you will," archly. "I will be with you soon." She vanished like some fair goddess of the night, flashing the emerald hues of myriad stars.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EVENING OUT.

"O sweet flower of love,
Gift from above,
Go with thy blossoms before her;
Tell her I love and adore her,
Say she's my only joy;
Ah, yes, employ
All the language of love
Her heart to move;
Tell of my hopes and fears,
Tell of my sorrow and tears,
Tell her how sweet her power,
So speak, sweet flower!"

THE vibrant tones of a rich contralto rang out with matchless purity in the glorious Flower Song of Faust. The singer appeared utterly oblivious of her surroundings and her eyes, as they were lifted, seemed gifted, as are often the eyes of the dying, with the faculty of seeing beyond the limitations of space. The single crimson rose which trembled on her breast seemed, to Margaret, at least, to burn with an intense brilliance as the words poured with passionate tenderness from her

lips. Once during the brief interlude Margaret thought there were tears glistening in the singer's deep blue eyes, that just for a second her lips touched with mute caress the fragrant petals near them; yet the movement might have been quite accidental. When her eyes were lifted once more they were dry and brilliant. Again rang out the throbbing notes:

"So, sweet flower, tell her I love her,
By the pure stars above her!
And when her form I see
My heart is free.
Sweet flower, my messenger be,
Speak then for me,
What I have never yet told her,
Say that my arms would enfold her,
Guarding from every ill,
Loving her still.
Thus speak, sweet flowers, for me,
Plead thus, sweet flower, for me."

The last words were flung forth with such heart-longing in their tones that silence for an instant, like a spell, fell upon the company, that supremest and most spontaneous acknowledgment of a singer's power; then Mrs. Lawrence bowed slightly toward her audience. The spell was broken. There was a perfect tempest of applause. She smiled, but the smile was sad and her eyes seemed yet on things beyond the ken of those about her. Margaret was certain that this adulation was quite barren of mean-

ing to the beautiful woman for whom it was intended. She would have liked to go to her and say: "You were singing to your own heart. You are unhappy. I would love to comfort you if I might." Yet when she could get near enough to her she only remarked, but with such marked appreciation in her voice as to gain a look of pleased surprise.

"That was true melody, Mrs. Lawrence. Won't you please give us something more? I do so love music." Her solicitations were seconded by many others; yet Margaret felt that the simple little ballads which followed were sung for her alone.

"Which is her husband?" she asked Douglass. "I cannot remember."

"Yonder he stands in the hall," Douglass said. "That rather good-looking chap spooning with your cousin. He is a *beau nonpareil*, is worth a cool million or two, and regularly falls in love with every debutante." He watched for the effect of his words upon her with something of the same interest that a chemist might await the results of a new combination.

He saw a little horrified expression creeping into her eyes. His analytic sense retreated in confusion. "Forgive me, Miss Stewart; I'm a brute," he said remorsefully.

"Is he not proud of his beautiful and gifted wife?" she asked.

"In a way," shrugging his shoulders slightly. "You think he is not paying her due respect?" he

inquired laughing. "O, don't pucker your brain over that, Miss Stewart. She doesn't care a rap, believe me—not more than she does that I am talking this blessed minute with you. By the way, since the others have somewhat scattered, shall we go over that you may become better acquainted with her? I believe you would like each other immensely."

"Yes, I would be delighted. I know I should like her."

Mrs. Lawrence was conversing with her hostess as Margaret and Douglass crossed over to her. Mrs. Dearborne was thanking her talented guest most profusely for her contribution to the evening's entertainment.

"Mrs. Lawrence," said Douglass, "Miss Stewart expressed a wish to become better acquainted with you. She thinks—pardon me for divulging secrets —that she would like you first rate, or something to that effect, wasn't it, Miss Stewart?"

They all joined in the laugh at Margaret's expense. Mrs. Dearborne withdrew from the little circle.

"I must be ubiquitous tonight," she explained, with a charming pout, as if the duty were just then the most unpleasant task that could be imposed.

"Mrs. Lawrence," exclaimed Margaret impulsively, "I did so enjoy your singing tonight. Your first song, too, seemed so appropriate—" she pointed to the rose on the other's bosom—"I felt almost

as if there were consciousness in that magnificent flower—as if it must have heard you speak."

The color deepened slightly on Mrs. Lawrence's cheek—perhaps it was at the delicate compliment from the girl; then with a sudden, nervous touch her hand felt for the rose on her breast. She laughed and bent its fair head backward to admire its glorious beauty. "It is beautiful, very beautiful!" she said, half dreamily; then suddenly the delicate stem snapped and the rose fell at her feet.

With a cry, almost of pain, she stooped and raised it.

"How did I do it?" she exclaimed, holding the bruised flower a little from her. Then Margaret saw her glance, as if some power had drawn her eyes involuntarily there, toward her husband. The man's black eyes were turned full upon his wife. A sinister smile rested in them. Instantly all the tender sweetness died out of the woman's face.

"I am a little nervous tonight, I believe," she said, turning again to address her companions, with all trace of her late emotion gone from her voice. "I was not feeling well when I came. Now that I have used up my false energy my head reels slightly." She pressed her hand to her brow.

"Why not step out on the rear veranda a few moments?" suggested Margaret. "It is not cold and the air will help you, I am sure."

"The very thing," replied Douglass with alacrity. "Allow me to help you, Mrs. Lawrence."

Out under the clear, starlit sky, away from the ceaseless hum of conversation, she sat down in a rocker and leaned her head wearily upon her hand. Margaret took a seat by her side.

"A little stimulant will brace you, Mrs. Lawrence. May I bring you some?" asked Douglass. "The Major has a good supply of every kind on hand, you know." She nodded assent and he stepped through the window into the room.

"Can I do anything to make you more comfortable?" ventured Margaret, laying her hand caressingly upon the fair head, shimmering like spun gold in the moonlight.

"No, thank you; you are very kind," was the listless answer. "I think if I were home I would feel better. They are all so tiresome, so meaningless to me—these affairs," and Margaret could see the misery in the blue eyes. She would have answered, but Douglass appeared at the open window. He stepped over to them and handed Mrs. Lawrence the glass in his hand. She drained the contents with feverish eagerness.

"Thank you, very much. I will feel better now, I am sure. I wonder if our carriage is here yet. It is after eleven. Mr. Lawrence gave orders for its return at about that time."

"I will see," Douglass said, "if you really feel you must go."

"Yes," she replied, "I think it would be best for me. I need rest."

He vaulted lightly over the low rail and walked down the driveway.

The two women sat in silence. Then, at the far end of the veranda, just where it rounded out at the drawing-room, a man and woman came suddenly into view. Their backs were toward the two spectators, but Margaret knew the petite form of the Major's wife and she recognized the man as Mr. Lawrence.

Unaware of the presence of others, they stood conversing in low tones for a few moments. The light from a window fell aslant them. The woman's face was raised coquettishly to his. Margaret caught the familiar low, rippling laugh; then she saw Lawrence bend down toward his companion and press her to him with a reckless laugh.

His wife must have been a witness to the scene, but she gave no sign. Margaret, horrified, stole a glance at her. The white lids fluttered down over the blue eyes as she did so. When she looked again toward the fatal spot, the two were just disappearing from view.

"There is Mr. Douglass, is it not, Miss Stewart?" inquired Mrs. Lawrence with consummate calm. Margaret struggled to reply, but her throat felt as though held in a vice.

"The carriage is here, Mrs. Lawrence," called out Douglass. Mrs. Lawrence arose from her chair as he came up. "Thank you so much," she said. "Now one good turn deserves another, does it not?

I do not think I will go in again. Would you mind bringing me my carriage wrap—a blue one. The maid will hand it to you."

"I consider it a pleasure beyond compare to be of service to you," he answered gallantly.

"Miss Stewart, I am so glad to have met you and extremely sorry that I have behaved in such a fashion. I hope our friendship may be continued," said Mrs. Lawrence, as Douglass, returned with the wrap, was placing it over her shoulders. She held out her hand to Margaret. It was icy cold, like the hand of the dead.

"O, it shall be continued, Mrs. Lawrence," was the warm response. "Come to see me very soon, will you not?"

"I certainly shall." Then Douglass took Mrs. Lawrence's arm and saw her to her carriage.

When he returned Margaret and he went back into the room. As they walked into the hall beyond Margaret saw among the gay throng her hostess and Lawrence in laughing conversation.

"I wish to speak to Lawrence a moment, Miss Stewart; will you come?" asked Douglass.

A feeling of revulsion swept over her, yet she knew she must not give way to its dictates.

"Certainly," she answered, but her voice sounded strangely hard to her own ears.

"Your wife was taken ill, Aubrey," remarked Douglass, as he stepped up to him. "She felt she better go home, since the carriage was here. I was

at her service in your absence. Mrs. Dearborne, she wished me to express her regrets that she had to leave in so unceremonious a fashion."

"Ill! and I not know of it? O, how can I ever forgive myself! Why did you not come to me?"

"It was unnecessary to disturb you, Mrs. Dearborne. I hunted up the Major and he gave me a glass of wine for her. She felt better after that."

"O, I am so glad, but—I wish I had known about it," repeated the sympathetic little body. "Excuse me, will you? Some one beckons. Mrs. Chatterton wishes to see me."

Lawrence looked after the airy figure with an expression that made Margaret shudder. She saw, too, that he was considerably under the influence of liquor. He turned to Douglass, an ugly scowl upon his brow.

Margaret intuitively withdrew a few steps.

"Damn her!" he muttered between his closed teeth. "Damn her, I saw. What does she want to stir up such a commotion for? She'd like to get me home at chicken hours, I suppose. It's no go, and she should know it. That little trick doesn't cut any ice with me." He broke out into a hoarse laugh and turned on his heel.

Two hours later when Douglass was bidding Margaret good night he said:

"Ah, by the way, Miss Stewart, have you seen a bit of Vanity Fair tonight, do you think?"

"It's all so strange," she returned. "I cannot understand it yet."

CHAPTER XIV.

WEARIED.

MARGARET arose the next morning with a feeling of weariness entirely novel to her. Her fitful sleep had been filled with confused dreams in which she seemed to figure as a bewildered spectator of Pandemonium. The men and women of her night visions mocked her with their horrid, grinning faces and diabolical laughter, as they floated past into airy nothingness. Once, attempting in her fright to free herself from the embraces of some maudlin phantom, a cry of terror escaped the tightened muscles of her throat. The sound penetrated the recesses of her own brain; on the instant the eerie vision faded and Phillip, smiling, tender, seemed to stand before her, upon whose breast she fell to weeping.

The effort waked her, and she found her lashes wet with tears, her hand still clutching at her aching throat. When she sank to sleep again it was only to repeat the scene or one yet more hideous, and she was relieved when the first faint streaks of morning stole through her open window.

After an evening of dissipation her cousins were not accustomed to partake of the morning meal at

the regular hour, and Margaret was much surprised when, shortly before the rising bell was rung, there came a hurried tap at her door and Yzabel's voice, amazingly awake for such an unseasonable hour, begged admittance. It was granted, and Margaret glanced in curious amazement at the dishevelled figure before her.

"You think my wits have gone wool-gathering, thus to invade your sanctum so unceremoniously, my fair cousin? No, no, listen! I have a story to unfold that will fill you with astonishment. I'm engaged!—engaged—engaged! Did you ever know such luck? 'Out' only one season and younger than Katheryn. I can't believe it myself. I've said it over at least ten thousand times in the last hour."

To state that Margaret was truly surprised at the breathless outburst was putting it mildly. Indeed, she had to look very hard at the figure sitting on the side of her bed, and just then in an attitude of ecstatic reflection, before she could assure herself that Yzabel was not still under the influence of Mrs. Dearborne's cooling mixture.

"Why don't you congratulate me on my good fortune?" asked Yzabel in a half-injured tone. "That is what I came in for. Don't stare at me like an owl. Katheryn's too jealous to admit she is awake. I simply hammered on her door this morning, yet she never gave the least sign that she was alive. Elinoir doesn't care, of course, for she isn't 'out' yet. She's rather glad of the prospect of

having a room to herself in the near future. I told mamma last night, though it was so late."

Yzabel paused, and Margaret seized the opportunity to answer her cousin's question of at least two minutes since.

"I will congratulate you on your good fortune when I understand more about it. You have not even mentioned the gentleman's name, Yzabel. Who is he?"

"I can't see that his name has anything to do with your congratulations; but if you need it, listen! Mr. Chatterton! Poor little unsophisticated kitten, how surprised you look! Wouldn't you ever really have guessed it?"

"No, I do not believe I ever should," Margaret returned.

"O, he is one of the best catches in Beechdale. No great riches—which of course is a matter to be regretted—but one of the best families in the village. They can go back—let me see—O, I don't know how many hundred years; but an ancestor of the Judge was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, and Mrs. Chatterton's great-grandmother came over in the Mayflower. Dear, I do wish I had my ring to show the girls. Fletcher is coming this morning to ask mamma's consent. Now it's your turn to talk, Margaret. Rattle away! Tell me what you think of it all."

"Why, all things being equal, I think you are to be congratulated most heartily, Yzabel." But

Margaret had that strange smile in her eyes which her cousins could never quite make out.

"Equal? What do you mean, Margaret?" asked Yzabel perplexedly.

"This: If Mr. Chatterton is equal in every way to his noble ancestry by whom you seem to rate him, and if you are positive that you are suited to each other and that you care a great deal for each other, I think the chances that you will be happy in your new life are very favorable."

Yzabel dropped her eyes and began toying with the lace on her sleeve. Then she gave an impatient toss of her head and laughed with palpable embarrassment.

"Stuff and nonsense! What a prude you are, Margaret; always trying to probe into the heart of things. Love is a very uncertain quantity, my dear. It is not nearly as popular as it was in our grandmother's day. People are growing smarter and they find it is better policy to deal in substantials than in airy nothings. One must marry into wealth or family, or both, which is still better. I dare say Fletcher and I will get along beautifully—as well at least as his father and mother. They never speak to each other unless it is absolutely necessary. But that is lots better than to be sparring continually. O, don't look so horrified. Half the married people in society do not care two raps for each other. It's a fact. But they get along swimmingly. When they come to the point where they just cannot endure

the pressure longer, they separate for a year or so. Mrs. Chatterton has been in Europe a year or more several different times. When Phoebe and Sara were at boarding school she was in Paris for two years. Both the Judge and she have a good rest that way, you see. Dear! I wish I had my ring. I—there! that's Katheryn's cough, isn't it? She'll have to answer, now. Good-bye!"

And with Yzabel's abrupt departure Margaret was left to ponder upon the advanced system of philosophy promulgated by a disciple of the present School of American Aristocracy.

"Will Katheryn be down?" inquired Mrs. Lansdowne later, when the available members of the family were seated at the breakfast table.

"I tried to get her up, mamma, by telling her all about Fletcher and how it came about, but she was just as cross as could be," answered Yzabel promptly. "Do you know, the horrid thing said that Fletcher was too muddled last night to know whether he was proposing to me or some other girl. The very idea! She wanted him herself; that is the trouble. She need not accuse Fletcher of taking too much! She would better look at herself. She and Mr. Boskin made a bet, mamma, as to who could drink the most champagne punch. Katheryn drank seventeen glasses!"

Mrs. Lansdowne, who did not seem to be particularly interested in Katheryn's extraordinary powers

of imbibition, inquired with some degree of curiosity as to the result of the bet.

"Who won?"

"Why, Katheryn! We all thought it was a huge joke on Mr. Boskin not to hold up his reputation better than that. Every one decided, though, that he was a little more top-heavy than Katheryn. By the way, mamma, Mr. Boskin is the jolliest fellow, and he just can't do enough for a girl. He bet Katheryn a five-pound box of Huyler's chocolates. I hope she will be generous with it."

Mrs. Lansdowne put the morning paper before her face to hide a half-suppressed yawn; then she glanced keenly at her niece for a second, but made no further comment upon her daughter's novel accomplishment or new-won laurels.

The preparations for Mrs. Lansdowne's approaching tea, to be given in honor of her debutante daughter, was now occupying all the spare time of the family, and after breakfast Mrs. Lansdowne and Yzabel became deeply absorbed in their work on the quest list, which seemed to be the duty most pressing.

Elinoir had promised to be at Madame Renaud's at half past nine, but not having sufficiently recovered from the gayeties of the previous evening, Margaret was importuned to bear her cousin's excuses to Madame.

Margaret was only too glad to breathe the delicious autumn air and to find herself, for a while

at least, free from the interminable chatter of her aunt and cousins. She left them deep in a discussion as to the advisability of inviting or not certain personages of Beechdale whose eligibility to the inner circle might be still questioned.

She found Madame out of sorts, and Elinoir's excuses were not received very graciously.

"That is the way," she cried excitedly, "but if I disappoint it is a crime! These people want their finery at a certain time whether they are here to be fitted or not. I go nearly wild sometimes, with all I have to do, and what is the gain!"

"O, Madame, how beautiful! how divine! how bewitching!" Then off they go in the carriage, and I am supposed to live on their fine words!"

Margaret was too astonished at the passionate arraignment to interrupt the angry modiste. At last, from sheer breathlessness, she came to a moment's pause.

"I'm sure, Madame," Margaret said, "my cousin would feel very bad if she knew her not coming had so inconvenienced you. I think, too, you must be mistaken as to her expectation that you advance her work as if she had been here."

"O, you do not know with what I have to contend! I have the best trade, but I have to pay the penalty. Look at this!" The irate woman pointed to an open letter which lay on a table. "That came this morning from one of your fine ladies—a leader in society. Her name is in every

charitable affair given. I see it in the papers. She is in all sorts of schemes to help the poor, but she owes me a bill of three hundred dollars, and has been owing it for a year. She writes that it will not be convenient to pay it till after the holidays. They must all go away for the summer, and I work night and day to get them ready, yet I could not collect enough money to take me to New York to see the styles. If I should tell them I did not go, I would lose my trade; so I have to lie about it, stop work for a week and hide."

Suddenly Madame's irritability exhausted itself, and, dropping her head in her trembling hands, she burst into tears. Misery never appealed in vain to Margaret Stewart. The girl laid her strong, tender hand upon the bowed head.

"I am very sorry for you," she said, her sweet young voice vibrant with sympathy. "You are overworked, nervously ill. Take a little rest from it all, can you not? Everything will look much brighter then, I am sure."

The woman raised her tear-drenched eyes a moment. "Rest! rest!" she repeated wildly. Then a look of frightened inquiry expressed itself on her face.

"O," she said, wringing her thin hands, "I was beside myself when I said what I did. I was tired, so tired and discouraged. I should not talk so of my patrons. How would I live without them? I do not know what made me do it—unless it was

your eyes. They seemed so kind and pitiful. I was so wretched—so wretched! O, you will not say anything of this to Mrs. Lansdowne, will you? It is all a lie—a lie. She is a lovely lady, and so are all her daughters. Tell Miss Elinoir to come to-morrow."

"I shall not repeat our conversation to any one, Madame, and I shall try to forget it myself. I am too sorry for you to do anything to make your burden harder to bear. It must be very, very wearing—this constant planning and trying to please. I wish you might rest before it is too late."

"Rest!" repeated Madame again, this time with a little incredulous smile. Then the bell announced another customer, and Margaret withdrew.

For the first time in her young life, as she gazed upon sky, tree, hill and valley, she seemed to hear nothing but the echo of the world's misery and pain coming to her. For the first time amid the exultant throb of existence everywhere, she felt alone.

When she reached home Yzabel came to her with sparkling eyes and imparted the startling intelligence that Fletcher was with mamma in the library, and that she was to have her diamond on the morrow!

CHAPTER XV.

A LETTER.

HEN Margaret reached her room she found a letter on her dressing table. The address was in Phillip's hand. The thoughts that had so recently harassed her vanished instantly on the joy of receiving a letter from home. With trembling eagerness she opened it and read:

My Dear Cousin:

According to a solemn promise to let you know regarding both our mental and physical condition, and also the state of the "crops," I herewith indite these few lines. Not to itemize, I will say that everything is thriving at Clover Farm, though of course things do not seem exactly the same without you.

Before I go more than a line or two further I must disclose a secret, for I cannot, as you very well know, keep one worth a cent. I have decided at last to go to Grangely Medical College at Leyton! Now it is out!

The very day you left I received a letter from Uncle Howard again offering me the money necessary for this year's schooling. He insists that if I

will not accept it as a gift that I will as a loan, payable any time before the next century closes.

I want to hear all about that new life you are leading and how you like it. I am longing for one of our good old-fashioned talks.

I fear that should I lengthen my letter I would be in danger of having no news when I come to Beechdale, in which case I should be driven to the desperate extremity of giving the floor to you, which would never do in the world.

Your father sends, of course, his best love, and I humbly subscribe myself

Your devoted cousin,

Phillip Vail.

P. S.—I will make a bee-line for Beechdale as soon as I have paid my respects to my future "alma mater."

The first emotion after reading the letter was one of joyous delight in the anticipation of Phillip's coming to Leyton; but the very next moment she reproached herself heartily for such supreme selfishness, for she thought of the many lonely evenings her father would have to spend without Phillip's congenial company.

When Margaret returned down stairs Mr. Chatterton had left and Yzabel was already in raptures over the contemplated trousseau. Mrs. Lansdowne had betaken herself to one corner of the library and was in the midst of writing the news of her darling

Yzabel's engagement to her dearest brother-in-law, Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne.

Mrs. Lansdowne possessed a most vivid imagination, and, during the last few minutes, had really wiped several drops from her light lashes while describing how her mother's heart was torn into shreds, as it were, in giving that irrevocable word of consent to the nuptials; yet she had also to confess that this same organ of feeling, in spite of the cruel laceration it had received, was buoyed up, at least temporarily, by the fact that Mr. Chatterton was a person entirely worthy of the honor which would accrue to him in marrying the niece of Frederick William Lansdowne.

While Mrs. Lansdowne would have been made twice glad had her daughter married millions *and* family, she was content, amiable, little body, to have gained one of the world's prizes, and she piously trusted the Lord and Mr. Frederick Lansdowne for the other.

After she had finished the letter to her satisfaction Mrs. Lansdowne read it aloud for her daughter's approval. This was given with such spontaneous enthusiasm that she could not but feel a permissible degree of pride in respect to her epistolary abilities. In fact, after the reading of that letter the self-esteem of the entire family had been quite materially augmented, and Katheryn, who had now become quite reconciled to her younger sister's expectations, broke in with "Mamma, I do think we

should be very careful about inviting the Billingsmiths. It will, of course, necessitate a close intimacy, and we know nothing about their family. Mrs. Winthrop told Phoebe the other day that Mrs. Billingsmith's father came from Ireland and was then just a carpenter, though of course he has become a contractor since."

Mrs. Lansdowne lifted her white hands with a deprecatory gesture.

"A common carpenter! The family of a carpenter received in high society!" she exclaimed. "What are we coming to?"

Margaret's ideas of high society and eligibility to the same were so pronouncedly opposed to those just extended that she could not refrain from giving expression to them.

"Why, Aunt Frances," she said in a tone of surprise, "have you forgotten that the Savior of mankind was a carpenter? Yet he was confessedly the light which broke through the darkness of that corrupt age. I do not mean that by virtue of his humble employment he was the grandest character that ever lived, but in spite of it; and he has become the goal toward which all humanity has striven ever since."

Mrs. Lansdowne felt the unanswerableness of the argument, and was proportionately irritated in consequence; however, she took care not to give her annoyance visible expression, and returned quite saucily:

"If you are not a socialist, my dear, believing all men to be on the same social plane; what, pray, is your line of division?"

"Do not suppose for an instant, Aunt Frances, I deprecate the power of either wealth or high birth, in so far as they are instruments to develop that which is best and noblest in us. But surely these are not to be considered the just makers of caste. If wealth has aided in the attainment of true culture, it has served its noblest and indeed its only legitimate purpose; if ancestral virtues have inspired us to a worthy emulation, then they have been righteous instruments; but let a man present himself to society, unheralded by either—as he has made himself. Let him rise or fall by virtue of his own attainments. I think this could not be called socialism, but democracy, true and undefiled, and the divine right of every American."

Margaret's feelings on the subject might have led her further, but she had the wisdom to know that good is often neutralized by being carried to undue lengths. She concluded that she had given sufficient prominence to her opinions, for the present at least. An expressive silence followed the words, and she herself broke it by changing the subject of their late discussion.

"I received a letter from my cousin, Phillip Vail, this morning, Aunt Frances. You have heard me speak of him. He writes that he has arranged to finish his medical course at Grangeley this winter."

Almost instantly the bored and provoked expression on the countenances of her aunt and cousins vanished.

"He will be at Leyton in a few days," she added, noting amusedly the effect of her words.

"How lovely," exclaimed Elinoir, radiant at the news. "How old is he, Margaret? Is he handsome? Will he call to see you as soon as he comes?"

"He is twenty-eight," responded Margaret, smiling good-humoredly, "and—yes, I think you might call him very good looking, but that you will have to decide for yourselves when you see him; good looks in the concrete are, I fancy, a mere matter of individual taste after all. He promises to find his way here at the earliest opportunity."

"Well, I hope you're not engaged to him, are you?" Elinoir exclaimed, looking at her cousin with suspicious scrutiny.

To Margaret this question was so highly absurd that she gave a ringing peal of laughter.

"The very idea! Engaged to Phillip," she exclaimed. "Why, Phillip is just like a brother to me. He has lived with us, you know, for nearly two years, and we have known each other ever since we were children."

The conversation was interrputed right here by the maid announcing that Mr. Douglass' coachman had just come with a note to Miss Stewart which required an immediate answer.

Margaret, not a little surprised, took the note and read it through.

"Aunt Frances," she said after finishing it, "Mr. Douglass has invited me to visit Chateau Bluff to-morrow afternoon. Will it interfere with any of your plans? He says his sister, Mrs. Pierson, and a friend will accompany us."

Mrs. Lansdowne flushed slightly, but she made a supreme effort to take the news calmly, as though it were nothing out of the ordinary; but, that Margaret should, with only one evening's acquaintance, have made such startling inroads in Mr. Douglass' good graces was not a fact to be received with perfect equanimity. She saw no way, however, of adjusting things more as she would desire them, so she answered quite affably:

"Go by all means, my dear. There could be no possible reason for opposing such an engagement, especially when others are in attendance. Write Mr. Douglass that you will be delighted to accept his invitation. Here is paper and ink at your disposal."

CHAPTER XVI.

A HEALTHY CONTRAST.

AS Douglass walked home with Margaret the evening of the Dearborne affair the conversation had turned incidentally upon the places of local interest in Beechdale, and he had spoken of Chateau Bluff as one of them well worth the seeing.

The owner of the chateau, a carver of wide reputation, was reputed to be one of the most eccentric of men, and when Douglass saw how his account of him aroused Margaret's interest he determined, then and there, to take an early opportunity for satisfying it.

This girl fascinated him by her fresh, natural beauty, the utter absence of anything like affectation, and above all by her very evident culture. It was a new experience this—not to be flattered and simpered at. It was really delightful, he thought, to turn into bed refreshed; to fall to sleep with an honest smile on his face.

"It takes some of the conceit out of one," he had mused as he lay on his pillow that night, "to meet a girl who does not *seem* at least to care a rap whether you marry her or not."

Even the next morning the spell was not broken,

and the thought of her rushed back upon him pleasantly. Though he told himself that any time within a week would do to plan for a visit to the chateau, immediately after reaching this conclusion Douglass took his horse and rode over to the home of the Great Carver; and two hours later found him penning a note to Margaret.

Though the morning arranged for the visit was one of typical October beauty, a strong northerly wind blew up in the afternoon and soon great patches of gray cloud began to shut out the brilliant blue of a few hours before; but as there was apparently no immediate danger of disagreeable weather, the pleasure excursion was not postponed.

Margaret was more than delighted when she found that the "friend" whose name Douglass had omitted to mention in his note was Mrs. Lawrence, and the haughty, almost austere manner of Douglass' sister, Mrs. Pierson, was compensated for by the cordial reception of the sweet singer of Beechdale.

Mrs. Pierson, much to Margaret's relief, sat with her brother, who had installed himself as driver on this occasion, which arrangement placed Margaret beside her new friend.

Margaret was enchanted with the ever varying scenes before her as they rode along. Douglass, feigning an interest in something which they had just passed, turned and stole a glance at the rapt face of the girl behind him. It seemed almost cruel

to break the spell that bound her, but curiosity obtained the better of kindness, and he said:

"Miss Stewart, if I had not had the opportunity of knowing the reverse, I might conclude you were demure as any little Quakeress; 'a penny for your thoughts,' as they say."

She started. "Ah, it is quite unpardonable to be so oblivious to one's friends, but"—turning her glowing face toward him—"after all, a penny cannot buy my thoughts, I am afraid."

"No? Well, perhaps I might be persuaded to be more magnanimous. We might take up a collection, too. My sister is good along that line. What is your price, Miss Stewart?"

She answered laughing: "To tell you the truth, money could not buy them, Mr. Douglass; now I am sure you think me dreadfully conceited, do you not? But I can hardly claim possession of them myself, you see. It was more of a feeling that held me, I think. Nature has always had a strange, indescribable power over me. She seems to weave a sort of spell about my senses. I cannot think; I only feel. Perhaps, though, the deepest sentiments of the soul can never find human expression. They are as spirits; when you try to lay hold of them they vanish. Does it not seem so, Mrs. Pierson?"

A half amused smile rested upon Douglass' face as Margaret addressed his sister; but the girl did not notice it. Mrs. Pierson looked bored. She had never been on particularly intimate terms with

that intangible part of herself—the soul. During the Lenten season she kept up a sort of "hide and seek" game with it, but the result was never especially profitable. After such special seasons of spasmodic introspection she was inclined more than ever to doubt whether she could prove conclusively that she really possessed the animating principle.

"I can't say, Miss Stewart" (Mrs. Pierson pronounced it cawnt—she revelled in the broad 'a'), that I have ever heard things 'unspeakable.'"

Mrs. Pierson had a very short upper lip, and it was abbreviated now more than usual. It gave an expression of polite disdain to an otherwise expressionless face. Mrs. Pierson was proud of this lip. It had come down to the present incumbent through four generations. Sir Dustan Douglass, knighted by King James V. for killing, in a drunken bout, a particularly cherished enemy of his royal Highness, had possessed, according to an ancient portrait, a similar lip; and it had come straight down, without any appreciable modifications, through all the succeeding generations of Douglasses. The Douglass lip, therefore, was a possession of which to be justly proud.

Margaret read intuitively the contempt for herself in the older woman's face, and she was greatly relieved when Douglass annnounced:

"Here we are at the Crossing! You can just see the top of the chateau to the south there, Miss Stewart. The ground begins to rise now as we ap-

proach the bluff." He checked the speed of his prancing bays in view of their long climb.

The house stood upon an eminence some seventy-five feet above them. Across the foot of the bluff and just beneath the chateau had been built a massive stone wall. At one end of the wall was a most imposing entrance, formed by two magnificently carved pillars of stone, between which swung a high double iron gate.

Here Douglass drew rein, and quickly securing his horses, helped the three women to alight.

"Helen," he said, turning to his sister, "I will take the carriage yonder to Marley's. You might walk on, perhaps. I will be with you before you have gone half the distance. Take your leisure; the climb is rather tiresome when one is not used to it."

The grounds of Chateau Bluff gave evidence of no cultivation whatever, though one possessed with artistic sense could see how, with little care, they could have been made very attractive. The wild growth which had evidently covered the slopes in many places during the summer might, at that season, has improved the prospect somewhat; but now only grey and leafless stalks covered those portions which nature had relinquished (as if grudgingly) for a scanty crop of iron and rag weed, thistles and creeping crab-grass.

The party had not proceeded more than half way up the gravelled path winding toward the summit,

when they heard Douglass' strong, clear hallooing from the gate. They stopped and waited until he reached them.

"Now," he said, laughing and panting from his exertion, "here is a problem in, shall I say, economics?—to so dispose of my two arms that I may help you three ladies up this path."

"I will aid you to solve it instantly, Mr. Douglass," replied Margaret. "Take your sister and Mrs. Lawrence on either side of you and let me forthwith give you an exhibition of what a country girl can do," and before Douglass could raise an objection, the girl's tall, lithe figure went swinging up the thirty-five feet before them with all the grace and ease of an Apline maiden.

When she reached the top she halted until the others came up.

"O, Mrs. Lawrence," said Margaret, looking at the white face of her friend, "you need just this kind of exercise. You cannot imagine, unless you have tried, how much one gets out of it."

Margaret's eyes were sparkling with the delight of her climb, and her cheeks were brilliant with throbbing blood.

"Yes, I envy you, Miss Stewart," replied Mrs. Lawrence wistfully, "for being the possessor of such perfect health."

"You and nature seem to be very fast friends," added Douglass.

"Very indeed," she answered gayly. "I cannot

tell the time when we were not; she has been a very gentle nurse.

"And Nature, the dear old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying: "Here is a story-book
Thy Father has written for thee"

quoted Douglass.

"O, why do you not finish it?" she cried.

"Come wander with me, she said,
Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread,
In the manuscript of God."

"That is the most beautiful part of the whole poem!"

"Whom are you and Miss Stewart quoting, Malcolm?" asked his sister with just the slightest perceptible curl of the Douglass lip. "Not Browning, I am sure."

"No, Helen, I am sorry to say your inestimable brother actually finds thoughts suited to the Douglass intellect, now and then, in such mediocre writers as Longfellow and other ordinary home talent."

"Have you ever read Browning?" asked Mrs. Pierson, ignoring her brother's good-natured sarcasm.

"Yes, last winter, father, my cousin and myself spent many a long winter evening with him. He is

fascinating beyond most writers, I think. There is a beauty and power, however, in some of our own poets that touch the human heart and give it as noble impulses as anything that was ever written. But the paths to greatness are many and diverse, and I am too much of an American, I am afraid, for conservatism even in literature."

"O, Miss Stewart," broke in Douglass, "there isn't the least particle of use to waste that precious logic on my sister. She is a devotee at the shrine of Browning, now and forever, world without end; and no place but the old country can produce writers worthy of mention."

Mrs. Pierson's face flushed hotly at her brother's remarks, but she did not deign to make reply.

They had been resting during this conversation on the first of a flight of broad stone steps leading up to the chateau. Douglass now ventured to propose an advance.

"O, yes," cried Margaret, springing up, "I am so anxious to see inside," but her eyes detected an unusual pallor in Mrs. Lawrence's face. Something impelled her to put her arm in supporting tenderness around the slender waist. Douglass and his sister were just at the moment a little distance from them.

"Are you tired, dear?" she asked softly, looking into the blue eyes, filled with a misty sadness.

"Not now; the long walk made me so at first." Then with a little effort to appear more cheerful:

"I have not had the advantage of being a wild rose, you see. Hot house plants are never robust, I think."

Then Margaret felt—or was it imagination?—that Mrs. Lawrence shrank ever so slightly from her clasp, and the blue eyes shifted uneasily before the pitying glance bent upon them. Margaret withdrew her arm, a little pained that her advances were not received more cordially; and so they passed up the steps side by side.

The chateau was built of smooth stone, with the exception of a small space over the door. This was of greyish plaster and modeled in bas relief. The design, a flock of birds, showed such exquisite skill of execution that both Margaret and Mrs. Lawrence gave enthusiastic expression to their admiration. Douglass then lifted the hammer of the carved knocker and curiosity was immediately satisfied in seeing the door opened by the master himself.

For many years gossip had been busy with the name of the Great Carver, who, with his motherless child and maiden sister, were the occupants of this unique home. Those who had never seen him were doubtless prepared to find one whose eccentricities of manner and thought had made their impress upon his outward appearance; but in this they were always disappointed, Margaret and Mrs. Lawrence among the rest.

The man who stood before them and who was

bidding them a cordial welcome to the little company was dressed in a grey tweed suit made after the regulation mode and harmonizing well with the iron grey of hair and beard. His features were rather small, finely cut and regular. The only peculiarly noticeable part of his physiognomy was a pair of bright, piercing eyes, the one blue and the other brown. They seemed ever on the alert, beholding every movement, anticipating every inquiry. His manner was genial, his voice low and even, and when he smiled, which he frequently did, there was displayed a set of well-preserved and glistening white teeth.

The room in which they first found themselves was large, occupying in length the central portion of the structure. The walls were of rough plaster tinted in varying but blended shades of cobalt, and around the room was a base-board of tulip wood nearly two feet deep and completely covered by surface carving. The ceiling was unlathed, and joists of the same wood were ornamented with borders of geometrical design.

"Are any of you ladies musicians?" inquired the host, smiling; "if so, this piano is at your disposal."

He pointed as he spoke to an instrument standing in an opposite corner. The case was of ebony, carved and inlaid with beautifully tinted woods.

"It is like many lives," he continued more seriously, "it will sometime I fear, lose the power to

produce, because no hand ever disturbs its long repose."

Margaret smiled incredulously; his keen eyes noted it.

"You do not think the point well taken, Miss Stewart?"

"The piano," she replied, "is not to blame for its silence. It is powerless in the hands of an untoward fate; but a life at least may be master of its circumstances and its environment. It should take care that its strings are constantly under the touch of a master hand."

"You may be right," he said reflectively, "it is not according to the philosophy I have held, however. But to my question once more—do not some of you play?"

"Mrs. Lawrence, can you withstand such an appeal?" asked Douglass. "You may be the preservation of that instrument."

"Do try; it would please him," whispered Margaret.

Mrs. Lawrence turned to Margaret with an expression on her face that seemed to say, "I will try; I want to please you." Audibly she said, turning to the Great Carver:

"I do not play, except accompaniments. Would you like me to sing for you?"

"It would please me beyond expression," he said, bowing low.

She drew off her gloves and stepped to the in-

strument. Her white fingers swept the ivory keyboard almost automatically and there issued forth the sweetest, mellowest of tones. Then the singer's voice rang out in a plaintive little Scotch air.

The last notes seemed to tremble and float away like wounded spirits among the gloomy rafters.

"You have given me untold pleasure," said the Great Carver; "this house has never been blessed by the Spirit song. I think it will always abide here," he added with solemn conviction in his tones.

For an hour more they lingered among the somber, almost oppressive grandeurs of the chateau, which, in spite of all the massive beauty presented at every turn, lacked the element which makes home.

"How dreadful you would feel if any misfortune should deprive you of all this labor of years," remarked Mrs. Pierson. "I suppose you would never have the courage to duplicate it."

The Great Carver smiled and showed his glistening white teeth for an instant.

"I am peculiar, madam, in that respect," he answered. "On the contrary, none of these things from the least to the greatest, have now more than commercial value to me. A thought comes; it would be agony could I not express it. I take material and carve upon it the language of my soul. I am relieved as one is who speaks a message with which he has been entrusted. It may please my fancy afterwards, or it may not; but henceforth it

is no longer a part of myself. The vital union between me and my work is dissolved immediately upon the completion of my task."

They stood looking out of a large window affording a fine view of the river and the hills that stretched beyond it, growing indistinct now in the distance. A leaden sky and wild wind made the spot seem more bleak and desolate than ever.

As the Great Carver ceased speaking a rude blast threw wide open the great double doors at the entrance. The four visitors started. Minds already influenced by their weird surroundings are in a condition most conducive to a belief in the supernatural; menacing faces seemed to lurk in the shadows of every corner, and the carved dragons and painted Furies stood with knowing eyes.

Margaret shivered involuntarily at the cold emptiness of the landscape. She withdrew from the rest, and wandered toward the dining-room, where, at that moment one golden bar of quivering sunlight had forced an opening through a jagged rift in the leaden battlements of the heavens. It split into a thousand scintillating shafts against the carved tiles of brass and copper which faced the broad fireplace; it lighted up by its reflected brightness the metal plates and trays upon an antique table.

Suddenly a knock—a timid knock it was—came from a door leading out of the dining room. Margaret was not of a nature to be startled easily, but such surroundings could but be oppressive even to

as buoyant a temperament as hers. She was about to retrace her steps and join the others, when she became aware that Douglass was by her side.

"I came to see where my guest of honor had slipped," he said pleasantly. "Are you ready to go? The sun has nearly set. Darkness will be with us in a little time."

Before she could answer the knock came once again, but this time more decided, followed by a slight opening of the door. A little black-eyed, frowzy-headed boy peeped in at them. He did not see the object of his search and threw a frightened glance upon the occupants of the room.

"What do you want, dear?" asked Margaret, her heart instantly going out in one bound of pity for the lonely little figure standing there.

Was it a strange potency in the girl's glance as her eyes met his which drew the child to her as a magnet draws its affinity? He dextrously eluded Douglass' detaining hand and buried his head in the folds of Margaret's dress. She bent over him and whispered something in his ear.

"I'm lonesome," he said, with infinite pathos in his voice. "I want my dad. Dad! Dad."

The last word ended in a wail. The ear of the Great Carver heard the cry of his child, and came, and from his heights of mental isolation he tried to comfort the little lad; but the distance was very great to span. The aged steps had strayed far from the fair courts of human sympathy and love, and it

was doubtful whether they could ever wander back again.

But the child clung passionately to his father's knees and looked up hungrily into his father's eyes. The Great Carver smiled benignly and his hands—those selfsame hands that had called forth the souls of wood, of silver and of brass—were laid upon the curly head.

And so they left the two.

CHAPTER XVII.

COMING OUT.

THE Lansdowne household was a very busy one nowadays, and between the preparations for Elinoir's "coming out" and the ever increasing social obligations of the now fully initiated season, there was little time left for private meditations; however, in spite of this constant domestic agitation the expected arrival of Phillip Vail was not allowed to fade entirely from the minds of two, at least, of the family, who had not as yet experienced the rare good fortune of being "settled in life." Each spent not a few of her idle moments in conducting highly intellectual and incomparably witty conversations between herself and Phillip Vail and both solemnly and unblushingly affirmed that they were madly, desperately in love with him.

Four days passed by, however, without further word from Phillip. On the morning of the fifth there arrived a note for Margaret posted at Leyton the evening before. It had the immediate effect of sending both Katheryn and Elinoir into esctatic raptures. "Read it quick, do, Margaret, and tell us what he says," demanded Elinoir. "Does he write when he will be here? Today? O, ye gods!

such fortune. A new man in Beechdale! Can it be true?"

Katheryn being the eldest of the family and, doubtless, feeling for the time the dignity of her seniority, was a little less demonstrative than her sister.

"Margaret, I hope you will not deceive us and take him yourself, after all," said Elinoir, looking her cousin squarely in the eyes. "There is no use wasting our time, if you are. You'll get Malcolm Douglass, perhaps—he's a splendid catch. You might give your cousin to us. Tell us the postive, honest truth, Margaret! Do!"

Margaret did not know whether to be indignant or amused at the inquiry. She felt inclined to be both; indignant, that her word should be questioned when she had already eased their minds, as she had thought, upon the vital subject of preownership; amused, at the surety with which they seemed to dispose of Phillip, body and soul, without considering for a moment his own individual taste in the matter. The allusion to Douglass, at that time at least, had little consideration.

"I thought I told you once, Elinoir," she answered with just the slightest hint of impatience in her voice, "that nothing serious exists between Phillip and myself; that we have known each other from childhood; that nothing could be farther from the thought of either. Please never mention it again."

Convinced for the present, Katheryn and Elinoir rattled on, each trying to persuade the other of the hopelessness of her suit. Both determined, however, to watch their possible rival closely.

Later Mrs. Lansdowns, meeting her niece in the hall, manifested her own interest in the affair by inquiring:

"Dear, how long did you say it would be before your cousin finishes his course?"

"One year, he hopes, Aunt Frances."

Mrs. Lansdowne passed on, in her usual airy fashion, to another subject, but the question was too suggestive a one for as discerning a mind as Margaret not to place upon it a private interpretation. It was evident to her that Mrs. Frances Lansdowne was acting the part of a zealous and prudent parent.

At four o'clock that afternoon, when the girls were together in the library, Maud, who was in her usual place at the window, suddenly announced the welcome tidings that a young man whom she had never seen before—awfully swell-looking—wearing dark gray trousers and felt hat to match—but with no cane, just an umbrella, with a wooden handle, was coming up the walk.

This rather disconnected description brought all parties to the window, and Margaret confirmed their conjectures. It was Phillip, at last—the long expected, the desired. A few minutes more and he was with them.

After a warm handshake and a brotherly kiss bestowed on Margaret, which was quite approved by Katheryn and Elinoir as boding no danger to their budding hopes, he greeted most cordially the Misses Lansdowne. Much to Yzabel's chagrin, young Chatterton had put in an appearance some fifteen minutes before Phillip, and she was obliged to be contented with hearing his tones now and then as they floated to her, sitting, with not a little impatience, in the reception room beyond.

Phillip was received instantly into the bosom of the family, and both Katheryn and Elinoir made every effort to have him feel himself a welcome guest. But, after a half hour or more on the Delectable Mountains, their happiness was brought to a sudden end by Phillip announcing that his call would have to be abbreviated because of an engagement which he was obliged to meet shortly. It being a delightful afternoon, Phillip suggested that his cousin indulge her love for outdoor exercises and take a little stroll with him.

Margaret acquiesced with joyful eagerness, and as she withdrew to prepare for her walk Mrs. Lansdowne made her appearance.

"We feel quite as if you were an old acquaintance, Mr. Vail," she remarked, holding his hand in the privileged manner of a matron of forty-five. "We have heard so much of you from dear Margaret, and we must love anyone belonging to her, you know. She is such a dear, dear girl!"

"Perhaps Mr. Vail does not know whom you mean by 'Margaret,'" suggested Katheryn, and then, before she was able to enlighten him, Mrs. Lansdowne, to the horror of her two daughters, proceeded to explain the little discrepancy.

"You see Pearl is a lovely name, Mr. Vail, a sweet, lovable, pet name, you know, but hardly suited to young womanhood. We have ventured to change it to the more dignified one for which it stands. My niece appreciates the alteration, I think. She is moving in a quite different circle now from that to which she has always been accustomed. She shows great tact, however, in adapting herself to the new order of things."

Phillip's blood boiled at the patronizing tone which Mrs. Lansdowne had almost unconciously assumed in attempting to make clear to him her estimate of Margaret's cleverness. He smiled a comprehensive smile, which mean many things, and indicated, by a slight inclination of the head, that he understood her meaning.

Margaret, entering the room at this point, the subject was pursued no further.

"Are you ready?" asked Phillip, rising. "I'll have to ask the pardon of these ladies in taking you off in so unceremonious a fashion, but I am quite sure they will excuse a brother's eagerness to tell his sister of all his newly formed schemes and deliver a few special messages from home. Will you pardon this seeming rudeness, Mrs. Lansdowne? I

am quite sure you would all be insufferably bored had you to listen to my accounts of the cat and the newest kittens; the flower-beds, and Janet's rheumatism, together with my cousin's homilies on economics, industry and the dangers of a great city." His brown eyes had such a merry twinkle in them, his manner was so altogether charming that Mrs. Lansdowne forgave him on the spot of every sin he had committed, while Katheryn and Elinoir fell more deeply in love than ever.

"Dear," called Mrs. Lansdowne, as Margaret and Philip were starting, "we would be delighted to have Mr. Vail dine with us tomorrow evening," and Phillip brought instant joy by a hasty acceptance.

"Isn't he divine, mamma?" cried Elinoir, clasping her hands in a tragic manner.

"Do you think he is in love with Margaret?" inquired Katheryn with more practical forethought. "I certainly do not want to waste any time if he is already a victim of Cupid's dart."

"To that, my dear, I cannot give a decisive answer," her mother answered. "I do not see any particular indications of it, however. He is certainly a very superior young man, one any girl might be proud of. Elinoir, my love, I think you should give way to your older sister in this matter. She has been out two seasons now and you are only just entering society.

"Mamma, Mr. Boskin seems captivated by Katheryn and if she works her cards well she can get

him this season, I am positive," reasoned Elinoir, not willing to give up the game so easily.

"Don't be in such haste to choose for me, Elinoir. I'll do that for myself, please. Katheryn Lansdowne is looking a little higher than Mr. Boskin," was the answer.

"Well, cut out Phoebe Chatterton and take the rector, then. You are too slow, Katheryn. I wager I will be married before I am out three seasons."

"I haven't been out three seasons," angrily.

"Well, you will be unless you mend your temper as well as your ways and I do not intend to give you the doctor, so there! I have just as good a right to him as you have," and with this parting thrust Elinoir, flushed and determined, swept from the room and left her mother to calm the turbulent passions of her eldest daughter.

"Perhaps when you are married and have daughters of your own, Katheryn, you will know the awful strain a mother has to undergo in such matters," quavered Mrs. Lansdowne in answer to Katheryn's complaint of allowing Elinoir to do as she pleased.

"You know as well as I do that I show no partiality, Katheryn," continued the poor lady in an abused voice, "and I am sure the best interests of all is my only wish. I think, though, as Elinoir says, you give in too readily, my dear. You certainly made no special effort to be agreeable to Dr. Harcourt when I invited him to dinner a few Sabbaths ago, and I thought he seemed quite attentive.

Phoebe Chatterton just clings to him like a parasite. I do not believe he has any serious intentions whatever. Depend upon it, it is all on her part. Try to be a little more affable the next time you meet him, Katheryn. He is a very cultured gentleman—there is no denying that—and you are quite worthy of him, I am sure."

"I think, mamma, I would make a better minister's wife than Phoebe," observed Katheryn, a little mollified.

"Yes, dear, so do I," replied her mother with an alacrity born of a sure conviction.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The NEW NAME.

"AND so my cousin has changed her name," remarked Phillip, after having exhausted all the news of Cloverdale and answered Margaret's countless, eager questions about home. They were strolling slowly down the broad avenue side by side. Phillip smiled broadly and significantly as he spoke.

"Not to you, Phillip—not to you!" she answered quickly.

A pleased expression passed over his face.

"So I am to be favored! Well, I will try not to disgrace you in public, at any rate. Your aunt was very frank about it all. She explained the change immediately and gave me to understand that your former appellation was rather out of date—in other words, I suppose it would have so shocked society that ostracism, or at the best a cold contempt, would have been your portion."

Though this explanation of the matter had never before been given to her, Margaret had all along suspicioned the truth of the garbled explanation of Elinoir on the day of her arrival. It was with the greatest difficulty that she could keep back the exclamation of triumph to which one always desires

to give expression, when his previous opinions on a matter have been confirmed; but respect for those under whose roof she was dwelling, and the fact that in spite of all their failings they were yet her relatives, kept her from disclosing even to Phillip their foolish deceptions. Therefore she only answered:

"The most abject slaves we have today, Phillip, and those to be pitied most are they who are bound hand and foot by the opinion of others. No slaves of the South had less power to guide their actions by their own decisions than those who live only by the mandates of Dame Fashion. But, Phillip, let me tell you"—and her voice took on a still more serious tone—"this life which I have entered is so new, so strange, so far removed from my true self that I am glad, in fact, to keep from its associations, everything that belongs to what I really am. It is as if I were taking a part in some great play."

"And is your play tragedy or comedy, or can you tell?" he asked.

"It seems as though it were comedy to those who ought to know," she answered. "I, from the few times I have been on the boards, would unhesitatingly pronounce it tragedy; perhaps I am mistaken. I really should not say for I have not seen the end, you know. Real tragedy should close with disaster, should it not?"

"All I ever knew of, yes. But laying aside figures, Pearl, what really is your estimate of all this

glittering show? Do you not care for it—this broader life?" He looked as though he would read her inmost soul.

"Phillip"—there was no sign of trifling in the dark eyes that turned their full and steady light upon him—"you remember one reason that brought me here; perhaps it was an unworthy one—a girlish vanity—but I wanted to prove to my relatives that I, though a country girl, knew intuitively how to conduct myself in other spheres of social life beside my own; that true lady might be found among the fields as well as in 'marble halls.' I wanted to show Aunt Frances that it is not these fields nor yet the simple life that brings discredit upon the tillers of the soil, but they who dishonor it, and Phillip"—she threw her head back proudly while the rich color surged in cheek and brow—"I have, I think, proved it to them; but I am learning a lesson, too. It is a great lesson. I have only just begun, yet I seem to see the end."

"When I return to Cloverdale it will be, I hope, with greater heart. I would rather have our country folk as they are—ignorant, shiftless, many of them, but honest—than like these whom I have lately come to know; whose lives are being lived according to social rules, yet who seem to be so absolutely careless of all higher claims. The one class is quite as undeveloped as the other. Only the point of view is different. Both lack that which makes for symmetry of character." She looked at him as if, for

confirmation of her words. Before he spoke, she read it in his eyes.

"You have diagnosed with skill the condition of the body politic," he said. "I believe that the greatest menace to our commonwealth today is not the ignorant turbulence of its common people, but the secret corruption, body and soul, of those who style themselves the flower of the nation. Some of the very crimes which are cried against, and rightly too, when committed by the despairing, or openly depraved have their counterparts, though safe from the eye of human law, among those of exalted rank. But their crimes are not hid from an avenging God. They are not the result of ignorant passions or abnormal physical development, but of cold, calculating, base desire for ease and pleasure. The sacredness of home is invaded with an inconsiderateness not to be found in worse degrees among the hopelessly corrupt. Vice walks triumphantly, disguised in the trappings of wealth and position."

The girl gave a little inarticulate gasp of pain. "Phillip, Phillip, as bad as that?" she cried. An expression of remorseful pity passed over his features. "I should not have uttered such words in your hearing," he said penitently. "What right had I to stir up your pure soul with such disclosures! Remember, though, I was not speaking of individuals but of a class—a class too who vaunt themselves the noble of our land; many of the lineal descend-

ants of those whose blood made this country of ours consecrated ground, yet who resemble their ancestry only as the shadow does the substance.

They were walking slowly along the beech bordered avenue which was in places almost ankle deep with autumn leaves. Every now and then a little gust of wind tumbled a fresh supply of burnished splendor upon their heads.

Phillip ceased speaking to take in the beauty of it all—the magnificent vista in front where, as far as eye could reach, two unbroken rows of trees stretched on until at last they seemed to merge in one hazy filigree against a background of reflected gold and purple. They both stood silent, reverent worshippers at nature's shrine.

Suddenly Margaret lifted her hand and placed it upon the arm of her companion.

"Phillip," she said, "do you remember when last we saw a sunset together?" He turned his head quickly and touched the slender fingers with his own. An expression of dim yearning crept into his eyes.

"Could I," he replied. "It was our last evening stroll together and the one that made you decide upon leaving three cranky people to get along the best way they could without their patron saint of the hearth."

They both laughed a little half sad, half happy laugh that was drowned by the clatter of a horse's hoofs just behind them. They turned. At the same

moment the animal was quickly reined in and a voice familiar to Margaret called out.

"Good evening, Miss Stewart. Are you also enjoying this glorious autumn afternoon?" It was Malcolm Douglass.

"You know my failings, do you not, Mr. Douglass?" she returned gayly.

"I think you must be one of the banished wood-nymphs of this region, returning to your old haunts," he said admiringly. He slipped from his horse and advanced toward Margaret and her companion.

"Mr. Douglass," she said, "let me introduce you to my cousin, Mr. Vail. Phillip, one of my new friends."

"Very happy to meet any one belonging to Miss Stewart," returned Douglass, grasping Phillip's hand most heartily. "Came to see how the barbarians in this neck of the woods treat her?"

"I am quite satisfied as to the treatment she has received so far," responded Phillip.

"One cannot overcome such a Juno as she is, in so short a time," returned Douglass with a laugh. "I did not know Miss Stewart had relatives about here beside her aunt and her family."

"I have just arrived at Leyton. I am attending the Medical College.

"O, is that so," answered Douglass. "I hope then to meet you often. I welcome you most cordially to Beechdale." "Thank you," replied Phillip.

Then he added: "I think I better try to catch this next car to Leyton. It is after five, Margaret."

A furtive look of amusement passed between them as Phillip after a second's pause uttered her new name. "I will be up to-morrow evening to dinner. Good-bye." Then he shook hands with both Douglass and Margaret and walked quickly down the avenue to get an east bound electric car to carry him to Leyton.

Something impelled him to turn and look back just as he reached the corner. The two were standing as he had left them. Margaret was patting the handsome steed and he saw Douglass lift his hand and place it down beside hers.

CHAPTER XIX.

PHILLIP.

MRS. LANSDOWNE'S family dined at six, and by five o'clock, on the evening following Phillip's call, the Misses Lansdowne were in the throes of expectancy. To make it the merrier and to show Phillip honor withal, the girls had very generously decided to share their new acquaintance with the young people from the Chatterton residence; so it was quite a jolly party which later were seated about the convivial board, and from her point of vantage the fond mother could watch the effect of the swift charges of feminine artillery directed against the fortification of Phillip's heart.

During his twenty-eight years Phillip Vail had had few opportunities for social life. He knew nothing of the trago-comic earnestness with which the matrimonial game is played; indeed he had not the remotest idea that this very evening he himself was the prize for which several fair ones present would be willing to stake their all.

"I understand, Mr. Vail, this is your last year of medical study. I suppose you will begin practising at once. I am sure you will succeed."

Mrs. Lansdowne concluded to open the conver-

sation by directing the general interest to her guest of honor. It would result, she thought, in lifting him in his own estimation, naturally there would be a rebound of gratitude toward herself.

"I hope so, Mrs. Lansdowne," he replied, "if fortune be so favorable to me."

"Do you know, Mr. Vail, I have always had a perfect penchant for studying medicine," exclaimed Katheryn, with a most honest glow of enthusiasm burning on either cheek. Mrs. Lansdowne felt that her daughter had effected a brilliant *coup d'etat.* She cast an approving glance in her direction.

Katheryn encouraged by parental approbation waxed warmer.

"I said the other day," she continued, "(Sara I believe it was to you or perhaps to Phoebe, was it?) that I had the greatest notion in the world to study medicine, just for the pure love of it, you know. I think every woman should have a practical knowledge of it, do you not, Mr. Vail?"

"You are quite mistaken, Katheryn about your mentioning the fact to me," broke in Sara with sarcastic sweetness. "I never knew you cared a pin for anything of the sort."

"Nor I either, Katheryn; it must have been our ghosts you confided in," supplemented Phoebe. An audible smile went around the table.

Elinoir shot an exultant glance at her adversary.

But Katheryn's equanimity was not to be overthrown in so slight a skirmish.

"Am I mistaken," she asked in unruffled tones. "O, well it does not signify to whom I said it, you know. It was to some one far more substantial than a ghost, you may be sure, Mr. Vail. But you have not answered my question yet; I suppose you cannot even recall it," in injured tones.

"O, yes, Miss Lansdowne; I am not so forgetful as that. He was too polite to hint he had not found an opportunity until then to express himself. "Yes, I think a woman should know enough about medicine to keep her from losing her head in times of emergency. I hardly think, though, I should approve of her going, except in rare cases, through a medical course, however. I can never advocate a woman stepping out of her sphere which is peculiarly her own to which she was born. In my mind it is extremely perilous to her sweetness, her nobleness, and her womanliness whenever she does. I do not say that it is an impossible feat, but there is great danger connected with its successful accomplishment. It changes character. It is the Rubicon across which women of this age are but too prone to go."

Katheryn felt that her wit had not served her well. A little grieved expression settled around the corners of her mouth for Phillip's benefit. He saw it.

"Miss Lansdowne, I hope I have not seemed to ruthlessly trample on your aspiration. I was led by

your question into a broader discussion of the subject than was necessary, perhaps. Pardon me."

The grieved expression vanished immediately and Katheryn gave him a look which signified entire forgiveness.

"Speaking about medicine," ventured Mr. Chatterton from his seat at the end of the table, "I thought of being a physician myself at one time—a specialist, you know—eye, ear and throat. It was eye, ear and throat wasn't it Phoebe? By jove! I've almost forgotten myself." Mr. Chatterton gave vent to a little fragmentary laugh. "Had to drop the whole thing on account of my health, though. Too great a strain on my nerves, too great entirely. Took up law instead. My father is Judge Chatterton, you may have heard of him, Mr. Vail. Law comes quite naturally to our family. My grandfather was judge of the Supreme Court for twelve years."

In the general conversational buzz which broke forth at this point in Mr. Chatterton's panegyric on his ancestory, Sara Chatterton leaned over to inform Phillip that Fletcher being so abnormally sensitive in the presence of suffering, could not endure the horrible sights so often to be encountered.

After dinner the party gathered in the library, there to await several other guests invited for the evening, and in the course of another hour Mr. Douglass, Mr. Boskin and the Reverend Harcourt arrived.

Miss Phoebe in spite of Katheryn's blanishing overtures drew the rector to a *tete-a-tete* chair in the corner, and Katheryn with disappointment in her heart and a smile on her lips went over where Phillip stood being entertained by the elder Miss Chatterton. He was listening to Sara's review of the previous evening's performance of La Tosca.

"Do you know I refused to go at first," she was saying as Katheryn came up, "so many persons criticize it severely. I was honestly afraid to be seen there, but I was persuaded at last. Mrs. Dearborne chaperoned Phoebe and me to the matinee, and we had a delightful time. O, by the by Mr Vail you must meet Mrs. Dearborne. She is the most adorable, delicious, little morsel of humanity imaginable. She is very much younger than her husband, the Major. He fell desperately in love with her and so it is another case of an old man's darling. She is German by birth and has the most fascinating accent. My father and the Major are very great friends. They both belong to the Society of the Sons of the Revolution. Are you eligible, Mr. Vail?"

"I am entirely unable to answer your question, Miss Chatterton. I really do not know whether I am eligible or not. I have never looked the matter up; but my father once said to me—I have never forgotten it—'Phillip, do not be so inflated over the fact that you were born as an American, rather glory that you live as one.' There is a great

truth in that advice, I have always felt. It is the creed of democracy in a few words."

"You are quite right, I believe, Mr. Vail," Katheryn hastened to say. "That is a creed well worth having and living up to."

Sara gave a little defiant toss of her head. "I am really broken hearted that I cannot agree with both of you," she said. "You see I have been brought up on entirely different principles. Creeds are all a matter of education at any rate. We believe what is taught us and reflect the sentiments and ideas of our teachers. But, I entreat, Mr. Vail, please let us not talk in such serious vein. I am dying to sample some of that punch yonder. Is it claret tonight, Katheryn? Yes? O, what joy!"

Phillip politely offered his services and the three started off leisurely toward the hall.

Margaret had been monopolized by Douglass since the latter's arrival. Several times Katheryn's jealous eye had noticed Phillip's glance resting upon the two. When Sara was drawn into conversation with Mrs. Lansdowne who mingled with the young folks now and then, Katheryn remarked to her companion:

"We are all so in love with Margaret, Mr. Vail. I do not know how we will ever be able to do without her. The men have lost their hearts at first sight. Mr. Douglass is her veritable shadow. A confirmed bachelor, too. Look there, Mr. Vail—really don't you think they make a most charming

pair?" She looked into his face with a provoking insinuating smile.

"I had not thought of it in that light, especially," he returned lightly. "I think my cousin, however, one of the handsomest women I have ever met and certainly Mr. Douglass need not be ashamed of his looks." If her words had wounded, there was no visible sign. He looked at Margaret and Douglass as he spoke, with the interest only of a casual observer.

Some one suggested a dance. Elinoir, who had been consoling herself with Mr. Boskin in a secluded spot on the stairs heard it. She jumped up and rushed excitedly toward Margaret.

"O, Margaret, dear, do play for us, you darling. I'm perishing for a dance. I haven't tripped the 'light fantastic' since—let me see—since night before last at Dr. Winthrop's."

"That is a long seige of privation,," laughed Margaret. "I certainly could not have the heart to refuse you. What do you want—a waltz?"

"O you're just as sweet as can be; don't you think she is Mr. Douglass?"

"Indeed, I do," was the reply given with a little more fervidness perhaps than such a remark called for.

Margaret went over at once to the piano and in a few moments five couples were whirling away to the delightful notes of a Strauss melody. Phoebe Chatterton clung to the minister, who gazed with

spiritual tenderness upon the face reposing on his clerical shoulder. Katheryn, however, was repaid later on by feeling herself, for the first time in her life, encircled by the arms of Malcolm Douglass. When exhaustion seemed about to invade the ranks Douglass laughingly whirled his companion over toward the piano when they stopped—

"Miss Stewart," he said, leaning over her, "you must certainly be tired if we are. We should not impose on good nature, do you think so, Miss Katheryn? I wish I could take your place, but I can't."

Katheryn took the hint, then upbraided herself the next moment for a hasty and foolish determination to please him.

"I'll play, Mr. Douglass, though I am afraid it will not be a very acceptable exchange. Shall I give you a new two-step?"

"Yes, anything," he answered.

"I am not tired, really," protested Margaret, letting her hands rest lightly on the key-board. Still, she arose, though Douglass said nothing more and Katheryn took her place.

The suspension of the music had brought the other dancers to a full stop. Phillip, with Sara Chatterton, had almost reached the piano when Katheryn began playing. In a moment the gayety was resumed.

Margaret's eyes met Phillip's once as they passed each other. Somehow even in that momentary

glance she thought the light had faded from them. A sudden pain struck her heart. She wondered if she had been unkind. She remembered that she had hardly spoken to him since dinner and he a stranger, too—dear Phillip! She was so filled with these remorseful thoughts that she was hardly aware Douglass was speaking to her.

"Do you know?" he was saying, "I have not danced for a year till tonight? Doesn't that seem a long period of denial?"

She nodded her head.

"But was it really a denial?" she asked.

"What a cross-questioner! No, it was not!" he said with honest frankness in his tones. Then silence fell between them. They stopped. Margaret saw Phillip standing with his back to her and talking to Elinoir and Mr. Boskin.

"O," she cried abruptly, "I am afraid I have been neglecting my cousin, Mr. Douglass. Let us go over to him now."

"Certainly;" then as they walked slowly across the room, he asked—"may I have the pleasure of taking you to Leyton to attend the services at Trinity? They are to give the Holy City tomorrow. I believe you said you were fond of oratorical singing." And she answered "Yes, I should be delighted."

"Phillip," she said, as they stood a little apart from the others, "we have hardly visited at all to-

night. It doesn't seem natural, does it? I don't like it."

"Don't you?" he said, eagerly, his face glowing with sudden pleasure. "Well, neither do I, but never mind; we can make it up, you know. By the way, Cranston, my roommate, tells me they have an up-to-date preacher at his church. Would you care to go into Leyton, Sunday?"

"I would love to Phillip but—but—"

"O, never mind if you have made another engagement," he said, all the eagerness of the moment before dying out of his voice. She noted the change, too.

"I'll ask Mr. Douglass to release me Phillip. Another time will do. He only—"

He caught her almost roughly by the arm as she turned to speak to Douglass.

"Not for anything! It would be considered unpardonably rude. It would take all the pleasure out of it for both of us. Believe me, it is all right, really, another time will do for us as well." He was smiling at her now.

"Well!" she answered, as if only half convinced. "But I am disappointed, Phillip." Her lip quivered as he had seen it do when he had hurt her unintentionally. Then Elinoir felt it incumbent upon her to call Margaret's attention to a witty remark of Mr. Harcourt who had joined the group.

Phillip excused himself somewhat earlier than

the rest and Margaret followed him to the door on pretext of asking him a forgotten question.

"Phillip, are you sure you have forgiven me?" she asked.

"Can there be forgiveness where there was never any fault? Don't think any more Pearl of that." He smiled and lifting his hat went down the steps into the night.

But Pearl was only half satisfied with the words. She lay awake for an hour or more that night recalling Phillip's disappointed face.

And Phillip Vail, when he found his room empty and a note pinned to his collar box from Cranston saying he had gone to spend the night with a friend, turned his light out and lay for hours upon his bed, face downward. Just as the bell of St. Mary's Church opposite pealed out three echoing strokes, he sighed and murmured hoarsely:

"Lost! Lost! my Pearl of greatest price!"

CHAPTER XX.

MARGARET'S ERRAND.

"MARGARET, my dear," drawled Mrs. Lansdowne, "would you mind walking over to Mrs. Lawrence's to see if she is sure she will be able to sing tomorrow evening. I went there yesterday after the French class; she said then she was feeling better; but there is not much dependence to be placed in Gertrude." Mrs. Lansdowne accompanied her last words with a frown of her freshly powdered forehead.

"I should be delighted to go," answered Margaret. I promised Mrs. Lawrence when she was here the other day to go over soon to see little Dorothy."

"Well, dear, I would be a thousand times obliged. You see Yzabel has gone out to consult Sara about her dress. She has such confidence in Sara's taste. Dear girls, they will be ideal sisters!" with a sudden burst of anticipative satisfaction. "Katheryn and Elinoir are still asleep. I could go, I suppose, but my head still aches with the extra work I had yesterday in preparing my papers on Louis Quatorze. I think I must have read at least a dozen books on his life. I really thought I would lose my mind in

deciding what to write. Did you ever study French, my dear?"

"O, yes, and enjoyed it very much, too."

"Indeed! I did not suppose they gave much attention to French in the public schools. They make a specialty of it though in all private institutions. Maud has studied it four years already. One should have a French governess though to become really proficient. There now, I must not detain you longer when I am so anxious to know about tomorrow night. I so want the musicale to be the crowning success. Don't stay long Margaret. It is ten o'clock now and lunch will be served promptly at twelve. Dear, dear, what a weight will be off my poor shoulders when this affair is over." Mrs. Lansdowne heaved a sigh whose proportions indicated everything but present happiness.

"O, give my best love to Mrs. Lawrence," she added as Margaret disappeared from the room.

Some indefinable influence had seemed to draw Margaret to Gertrude Lawrence even at their first meeting. Margaret, however, had felt that this new friend, while she was uniformly courteous and kind, desired no closer intimacy than that established on most formal basis. But lately Margaret had come to the conclusion that she had wronged her friend by a too hasty judgment, for the cordiality which Mrs. Lawrence now showed seemed entirely to contradict the first impressions given; and this morn-

ing the reception accorded Margaret by her hostess only strengthened the belief.

Mrs. Lawrence dropped everything like reserve toward her visitor and seemed a really contented woman and happy mother as she fondled her three-year-old baby girl and persuaded it to go to Margaret's arms. Margaret asked herself perplexedly if this beautiful, laughing, blue-eyed woman in her dainty, trailing robes could be the same as she who had stood before her once not long ago with a world of hopeless woe written on her face.

"How happy you must be, with such a darling," Margaret exclaimed enthusiastically as she pressed the golden, baby head against her own cheek.

The mother smiled and bent forward. The child stretched out one dimpled hand and caught at the crimson rose that lay upon its mother's bosom. "Booful? Booful? Mine!" cried the child, crushing the fragrant petals in her hand. They fell like drops of blood upon the white fur rug at their feet.

Margaret tried to unloose the baby fingers from their treasure. "Oh, what a pity," she cried and looked into the mother's face. It was pale almost as the white gown of her baby, and in the blue eyes had come the old look of despair.

With an overpowering desire to comfort, a desire born of the great pity that had been awakened in her breast since the hour she had first met her, Margaret put out her hand and laid it gently on the

other's shoulder. Gertrude Lawrence shrank back, as though the touch had been fire; Margaret cut to the heart withdrew her hand instantly. She looked away toward the window and her eyes caught what she had not noticed before, though the perfume was heavy in the room, a vase of the crimson beauties. She wondered why with such an abundance of equally beautiful trasures at her disposal, the loss of one gave pain. She was about to remark on their loveliness when a gentle knock was heard at the door.

"Is it you, Annette?" inquired Mrs. Lawrence.

"It is, madame."

The voice was unmistakably that of a French woman.

"Come in."

Dorothy almost sprang from Margaret's arms as the maid entered the room. Margaret put the little one down. It toddled toward the nurse and laid its curly head on the girl's breast.

"*Aimez-vous votre* Annette?"

The child nodded her head.

"*Comment?*" inquired Annette turning the child toward Margaret.

"Yes," answered Dorothy with a roguish, little twinkle in her eye.

A look of determination came into Annette's dark face. The child saw it and tried to run from the detaining arms.

"*Je ne sais que vous disez,*" the nurse insisted.

"*Aimez-vous votre* Annette?"

"*Oui,*" came the answer lisped in baby accents. They all laughed. Annette gave the child an approving glance and arose with her in her arms.

"*Au revoir!*"

"Aw-vah," repeated Dorothy, waiving her tiny hand.

"Is it time already for her drive, Annette?" inquired the mother going over to the child and kissing the rosy lips raised to hers.

"Yes, madam, it is late."

"Very well, Annette." A little sigh escaped the mother's breast. "Good-bye, darling!"

Mrs. Lawrence had gained possession of herself once more, though her sweet, bright mood had vanished, and when Margaret said good-bye some half hour later, she longed, yet dared not press her lips to those of the sad-eyed woman by her side.

She went home bewildered as she had not been before. What was this woman's history? How could her strange actions toward herself be accounted for? Was there some malign power enshrined in a crimson rose that twice had been destroyed in her presence? A hundred wild fancies crowded in her brain and mingling with them always was that scene they had both witnessed upon Mrs. Dearborne's veranda. She recalled how strangely indifferent her companion had been to what was enacted there.

It was nearly twelve when Margaret reached

home. She was nervous and depressed. Her aunt's eager voice jarred unpleasantly upon her ear.

"Well, Margaret, will she be here? I thought you would never come!"

"Yes, Aunt Frances, she said you may depend upon her."

"Is she quite well then?"

"Quite well, I think."

Then Mrs Lansdowne satisfied, lay down once more among her pillows and Margaret, glad to escape more wearisome questioning sought her room.

CHAPTER XXI.

PREPARATION.

BETWEEN the hours of one and three the following day it was certainly a most busy household that performed its various duties at the Lansdowne residence. Upstairs and down prevailed the wild haste that in the end makes waste, but which, nevertheless, will exist in the best regulated families on such trying occasions as weddings or teas.

Margaret seemed to be the only self possessed person during this critical period, and several times she came to the rescue when Mrs. Lansdowne was on the verge of despair. But at last a well-earned opportunity came to escape to her own room where she accomplished her own toilette without the aid of even one attendant. When she was ready to emerge once more she looked a veritable queen in her gown of fluffy whiteness, falling in soft folds over its glistening slip of ivory white satin.

"Aunt Frances said I must put one of these roses in my hair," she said to herself as her hand toyed with a great bunch of Katherine Mermets in a vase by her side. How kind it was of Mr. Douglass to think of me. Phillip sent me bride roses the night

I graduated. He thought a pearl should wear only white." She smiled at the remembrance of Phillip's "foolish fancy," yet the smile was one of pleased indulgence. "Dear Phillip! Dear brother!" she whispered softly, and even with the words fastened one pink rosebud in her wavy hair.

A few moments later she tapped at her aunt's door and was admitted.

"I am all ready, Aunt Frances. Can I help you or the girls in any way?" she inquired.

A quick look of admiration passed over her aunt's face. The pale blue eyes swept critically over the superb figure of the girl before her, but she merely remarked: "Margaret, dear, the satin is quite an improvement. You look well—very well indeed."

But Mrs. Lansdowne was not in a condition to pass many compliments. She was putting forth heroic efforts to enclose her twenty-five inch waist in a skirt several inches smaller.

"May I try?" asked Margaret, noting her aunt's futile endeavors. "You are too nervous, I am afraid."

"Yes, if you will, Margaret. Betty has just gone down stairs to get me a little port. Any excitement always makes my head swim!" explained the perturbed lady.

But even Margaret's strong muscles were hardly

a match for the task before them, and after two or three vain attempts she said:

"Why Madame Renaud has made a mistake surely, Aunt Frances. The band is at least two inches too small."

"O, let me sit down a minute," gasped Mrs. Lansdowne.

"I think I can manage it. Bring me that fan, Margaret? Thank Heaven! there comes Betty at last. Betty, see what you can do to get this belt fastened. It must fasten, you know. The girls are in the other room, Margaret. Miss Burton is there taking items—the society editress. She will want to see you, so go, my dear. She just worried me to death asking questions. These newspaper reporters are such bores, but"—resignedly—"one cannot keep them out. It is one of the trials of social life."

Margaret found the vivacious little woman going into ecstacies over the well-nigh indescribable loveliness which was confronting her on every side.

"I understand," she was saying, as Margaret entered, her keen, black eyes resting on the diamond flashing on Yzabel's left hand," that the affair has a double social significance—Miss Elinoir's debut and the public announcement of your engagement to Mr. Chatterton. Oldest son of Judge Chatterton, is he not?"

Miss Burton scribbled unceasingly on her note pad as she talked.

"Yes," answered Yzabel, "and the Chattertons are an old Virginian family, you know. One of the family was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Mrs. Chatterton's great grandmother came over in the Mayflower."

Margaret thought she detected a little sarcastic smile linking around the corners of Miss Burton's mouth. However, when she had finished making a few notes and turned in Margaret's direction, she wore the sweetest and most innocent of looks.

"My cousin, Miss Stewart," said Elinoir, in reponse to Miss Burton's look of inquiry and, without further information from Elinoir, Miss Burton after one comprehensive sweep of her black eyes over Margaret, began once more her indefatigable note-taking.

"Miss Burton, you have not seen the decorations down stairs, have you?" inquired Katheryn entering just then from an adjoining room. "You are quite at liberty to go from attic to cellar, you know."

Margaret slipped across the hall to her room for a moment. Presently through her open door she heard her aunt's tones:

"Yes, Miss Burton, Elinoir's is a Paris gown. The lace on her bodice, an heir-loom. Yes, very old indeed, and extremely rare. Of course, my dear,

this must not be told outside ourselves. You terrible people do pump us so!"

Margaret drew her breath in a little gasp. She remembered the day Elinoir had gone to Madame Renaud's about this very dress. She passed her aunt and Miss Burton standing in the hall, and there came to her as she descended the stairs snatches as of an oft-repeated refrain: "Judge Chatterton—old family—Declaration of Independence —eligible—Society of—Revolution."

In after days when Margaret called to mind her first experience at a high social function she remembered details of the event which at the time of their transpiring were lost in general impressions. What at first appealed to her senses were the masses of pink blossoms everywhere, sending forth their almost intoxicating fragrance, the gayly attired, constantly moving throng of people and the penetrating sweetness of the music.

By four o'clock, the high-water mark of an afternoon affair, a "crush," was reached. The rooms and halls of the lower floor were crowded in some places almost to the point of suffocation with a smiling, chattering, flattering, envying, society mob.

"My dear, how sweet you do look! Positively entrancing!"

Margaret turned as the familiar, musical tones reached her ear, to see standing at her side the Major's wife attired in the most bewitching of cos-

tumes, her face wreathed in smiles and her dainty gloved hands extended toward her.

A sudden revulsion of feeling swept over Margaret, but she remembered that for the time she was her aunt's representative among the guests, and that it was incumbent upon her to extend every courtesy to those invited to partake of her aunt's hospitality. She therefore smiled in return and acknowledged the compliment.

"I hope you are having a pleasant time, Mrs. Dearborne. It is rather difficult to circulate freely among so many, is it not?"

"O, I have had the most charming time, I assure you. Indeed, my dear, I do not mind a crowd in the least. I was having a little chat with your cousins when I happened to spy you. I said I must come over at once to speak a few words with my favorite. My dear, quick, isn't that Mrs. Pierson over there with that exquisite bolero? Mr. Douglass' sister, you know."

"The lady in the black and white? Yes."

"Thank you! I am so glad to be positive. I should like to make myself known to her. Mr. Douglass is such a charming man. I feel as if I should know his sister. She is away so much of the time and I am here such a little while, you see, that it has happened we have not met."

Just then Mrs. Pierson moved onward and the conversation was ended abruptly as Mrs. Dear-

borne fluttered away like a pursuing butterfly in a garden of roses.

"Good-bye my dear! I will see you this evening again if not before," she rippled back.

Margaret felt a sense of relief when the Major's wife took her departure. She was weary, too, of standing, and of the ceaseless treble din in her ears, She made her way over to a spot that for the moment seemed to offer a breathing space as well as a secluded seat just back of a bank of palms. She had no sooner reached the desired haven, however, when Miss Isham and Mrs. Fiswick came toward her.

"I was just saying, Miss Stewart, that we could not go without saying—'how do you do,'" began Mrs. Fiswick. "What a delightful informal tea this is, and your cousin Elinoir is a perfect picture this afternoon, and Yzabel looks so radiantly happy. Such attractive girls, all of the sisters."

"Your aunt does entertain so beautifully," chimed in Miss Isham.

Then Mrs. Fiswick, wife of the one time rags and paper dealer (in recent years proprietor of the Aberdeen Stationary Co.) caught a fleeting vision of the wife of dear Dr. Winthrop and vanished. Miss Isham deserted thus unceremoniously, after passing a few more commendatory remarks on the afternoon affair made her way toward Mrs. Chatterton to extend her congratulations on the recent engagement

of her son to the niece of Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne.

Mrs. Chatterton and her young aides were supposed to see to it that the guests were served to refreshments as quickly and as comfortably as circumstances would permit. If their efforts in that direction, however, in any way simplified matters, it was not apparent. The ability to refresh the inner man seemed to be porportionate only to the amount of tact and watchfulness possessed by the famishing individual. So Mrs. Chatterton, at least, felt her duty conscientiously performed when she lifted up the train of her wine-colored velvet and moved through the parting throng with the tantalizing inquiry—"Have you been served?" But, as Mrs. Chatterton looked vaguely into space, no one felt that the question had more than rhetorical value and the guests waited patiently and drank champagne punch in the interum till a break in the solid phalanx around the serving table could be discerned.

As Margaret's eyes surveyed the gay assembly, thoughts far more serious than those generally indulged in on such occasions were hers. She looked at her aunt smiling, bowing, radiant, between Elinoir and Yzabel. Could this be the woman she thought who only a little while before was wearied almost beyond endurance; yet who for two mortal hours had been standing on that spot without a moment's cessation—an ordeal not to be underated—

and was looking quite as smiling and fresh as if she were just beginning to greet her friends? Was the earlier and seemingly habitual physical state of her aunt entirely feigned? She could hardly think so. Her aunt doubtless was being supported under this great physical strain by the strength which enables even the weakest sometimes to attain the goal, when that goal is the gratification of a personal ambition. To Mrs. Lansdowne the fact that at her bidding were assembled the elite of Beechdale to honor the launching of one neice of Mr. Frederick Lansdowne on the social sea, and to celebrate the prospective alliance of another with the scion of an old and distinguished family, filled her cup of joy to the very brim. She was quaffing from an elixir which could impart bounding life even to shattered nerves.

Then Margaret's thoughts returned to the brilliant company around her. She had seen and heard too much during these few hours to be deluded into the belief that all present had come to do honor to their hostess. Many she knew were there that they might be seen of their neighbors, for in a few of these cases absence from social functions would certainly argue present and probably future exclusion. Others had come perhaps to display a new gown or imported bonnet or that they might judge whether Mrs. Lansdowne's tea could compare favorably with similar affairs of their own. A few, as Mrs. Dearborne would feel the occasion an auspici-

ous one to gain an introduction to those whom as yet they gazed at from afar.

"Looking as solemn as an owl and on such an occasion, my dear Margarhetta!"

Margaret started and became once more a part of the life about her. Mrs. Dearborne was standing tip-toe, her hand resting lightly on the girl's shoulders.

"My dear, I must tear myself from this enchanting place."

"I will see you tonight; till then 'Aufwiedersehen.'"

CHAPTER XXII.

IN FASHION'S WHIRL.

TO Margaret it seemed as though one woe trod upon another's heels, so quickly did the "informalities" of the afternoon merge into those of the evening; still there were some redeeming features in the coming hours—Phillip had promised to come and—yes, she would confess it—Malcolm Douglass' presence would add to her pleasure. He was different from the other men; he seemed more like Phillip.

"Dear Phillip!"

Margaret always felt, somehow, after giving a few moments consideration to Douglass' virtues, that she ought to do penance by reflecting with greater tenderness than ever upon her cousin. After all, though, she thought no one could take the place of Phillip in her heart.

He had promised to come early but it was past nine when he arrived. Having paid his compliments to the hostess and her young daughters he turned to find Margaret. He saw her standing some distance from him at the other end of the room. He had made his way nearly to her side when the space was suddenly closed by Douglass. Phillip made no further effort to advance, but stood there with that strange new pain tugging at his heart strings.

Margaret was busily engaged in conversation and she did not see Douglass until he bent his head down near hers and said *sotto voce.*

"Miss Stewart, I have been here a half hour and you have dodged me the whole time!"

Phillip saw her start, and then, flash upon Douglass one of her rare, sweet smiles in which splendor of eyes, carmine of full, curved lips and dazzling whiteness of close-set teeth so combined, as to hold the recipient in thrall for the moment.

"Dodging you, Mr. Douglass! You do not know me then," she answered smiling and looking him full in the face. "I never dodge. I would rather meet my opponent, had I one, fairly and at once. Be assured," she added with a little, low laugh, "if I had a reason for not desiring your further acquaintance, it would take only my earliest opportunity to let you know."

"I hope I shall be spared such an ordeal," he answered almost with gravity. "I believe I should be tempted to go out and hang myself!"

"O, Mr. Douglass, don't take all this nonsense so seriously," she exclaimed with a pretense of horror in her voice. "I never cut my friends except on the gravest charges. You are in no danger. Why I could not imagine it even—that we were not the best of friends. It really seems as if I must have known you all my life."

"Does it really? he asked her eagerly; then bending nearer to her, so near that his face almost

touched one dark stray lock on her temple he added, with a slight tremble in his rich, musical voice: "Would you believe me if I said that I simply came to-night—"

Chance, perhaps something more potent, determined that the sentence should not be finished. As if drawn by some unseen influence, Margaret at the moment turned slightly, lifted her eyes and with the smile which Douglass' words had called forth playing about her lips, looked straight into Phillip's face—white and stern as she had never seen it before.

"O, there is my cousin, Mr. Douglass. Why Phillip!" she said stepping forward to clasp his outstretched hand—"how long have you been here? I have kept my eye on that door for the last hour, expecting you every moment. Why didn't you come early? You promised!"

"I have been Miss Setwart's knight errant for so long Mr. Douglass," returned Phillip with rather a poor excuse of a smile, "that it is very hard for her to realize that lectures, study and a hundred other incidentals step in without warning like so many dragons to give her cavalier fight before he is allowed to pursue his unhindered way. Out in the country with nothing to do but sun one's self all day long in the winter there isn't much cause for breaking engagements you see."

"O, Mr. Douglass, pray do not think him the lazy

fellow he is trying to make himself out. Indeed, father heaped such enconiums upon his head for his industry that I really feared he would take away all his ambition for becoming a doctor. The dear country people would have broken their hearts over such a calamity as that. They fully expect my cousin to return crowned with laurels and doctor them for the rest of their mortal lives."

"Well, it isn't every one who is so supremely fortunate as that, Vail," replied Douglass," a whole village just waiting to languish on feathery beds of sickness as soon as the sheepskin is forthcoming.

"Don't imagine that the good people of Cloverdale are so accommodating," responded Phillip quite good naturedly.

The conversation was interrupted by Mr. Chatterton's unmistakable accents. Mrs. Dearborne stood smiling and leaning on his arm.

"Ah, Vail, my good fellow, how are you? Glad to see you this evening. Mrs. Dearborne allow me to introduce to you Miss Stewart's cousin, Mr. Vail. The two make a charming couple, do they not? Ha-ha-ha! 'pon my honor, charming."

Margaret and Phillip were standing together and slightly withdrawn from Douglass. The observation, of no particular significance originating, as it did in Mr. Chatterton's brain, sank with undue weight into the hearts of at least two of the circle; Douglass glancing in that direction felt a fierce pang of jealousy arising, and Mrs. Dearborne,

seized with a craving to repay Margaret for a certain coolness of manner which she had observed in her, suddenly recognized an opportunity for retaliation.

Instantly the Major's vivacious, little wife assumed her most winsome manner.

"Is this Mr. Phillip whose praises I have heard sung so often? Ah, forgive me! I take too much liberty—perhaps? I should have said Mr. Vail, but I have heard your cousin speak of you so often, 'Mr. Phillip' came to me naturally."

"You have not trespassed, Mrs. Dearborne. Use my name as you choose," answered Phillip, courteously.

Mrs. Dearborne cast down her fluttering lids and blushed. It had been one of Fraulein's accomplishments to become suffused in blushes on occasion. Blood as well as lips and eyes responded to the will of this incomparable little sorceress and the wife of Major Dearborne had by no means forgotten the arts of the Fraulein.

"Well, then,—Mr. Phillip, have you tried the punch? No? I am very thirsty myself, will you come?"

She put her hand on Phillip's arm. It rested there as lightly as the petal of a rose. Her form breathed unconscious grace. She seemed the embodiment of the music which the harpist was at the moment discoursing.

Phillip Vail was a thorough gentleman. Mrs. Dearborne had expressed a wish, and though its gratification would again separate him from Margaret he did not question his duty of the moment. He turned toward Mrs. Dearborne and smiled assent—then glanced at Margaret. Douglass was bending toward her, as he had seen him do once before that evening. The gloomy expression which flitted over the fine face of her escort did not escape the notice of the Major's wife, and she forthwith determined to use all her ingenuity to dispel it.

Chatterton, suddenly deprived of his fair partner, looked ruefully down at his patent leathers and treated his freshly culled mustache to several extra twists; then, with half reluctant step, strolled after the two, leaving Margaret and Douglass alone together.

"I suppose," Douglass said, after a moment of silence, "this affair might be called a 'tearing success.'"

He glanced with a significant smile at a girl not far from them, who was mournfully examining a rent in her gown.

Margaret enjoyed the unmistakable reference.

"It might," she said, "but"—and her face sobered a little—"do we all understand the meaning of that word success? If only we could all agree in regard to it, how much happiness won."

"You would not call this a success, then?" with assumed surprise.

"I think it is a successful crush," she responded. "I am actually wedged in here and have been for fully three minutes."

Douglass saw his opportunity, and seized it.

"Pardon me, Miss Stewart," he said, "I should have taken you out of this. Shall we seek a quiet nook yonder?"

She assented, and they walked over to an arched doorway, which afforded an entrance to a small reception room. Douglass pushed aside the silken drapery and looked in. The room was dimly lighted by oriental lamps. They shed a faint rosy glow over some half dozen couples lounging on the luxuriously pillowed window seats, and in cosy corners.

"Standing room only!" he remarked, facetiously.

Margaret laughed, and then allowed her tall, superb figure to pose with graceful nonchalance against the framework of the arch. As she did so the rosebud in her hair was loosened. She lifted her hand to fasten it in its place; a look of sudden pleasure flashed in her eyes.

"O, Mr. Douglass, I want to thank you again for the lovely roses which you sent me. You received my note, did you not?"

"Yes, but I felt from its wording that you overvalued the gift and undervalued the recipient. I would have said"—he paused an instant to give the words which followed special emphasis—"if another woman had written that note that it was a

society effusion. Somehow it is different with you." Then he added, as a sort of after thought, "Everything is different though when you do it." An expression of earnestness, unnatural to features upon which rested so often the smile of mockery, came into his face. The words that followed were spoken vehemently, almost recklessly. "You are the first woman, Miss Stewart, whom I ever met who could make me feel, too, that woman might yet fulfil her mission—the redemption of man. She made him lose Paradise—she was successful there." His lips curled in bitterness. She looked at him as if she were utterly amazed at the disturbance of his accustomed calm; as if standing on a site of peaceful beauty she had become aware that a seething volcano lay at her feet.

"You are not putting too high an estimate on woman's trust," she answered him, "but I should feel sorry to believe that I am the only woman who has ever touched your higher nature; I think it must have been touched many times before or—or—" She hesitated.

"Or what?" he asked, curiously.

"Or you would not be what you are," she replied, simply.

A dull, red flush swept over his face and he cleared his throat nervously.

"Well, I never contradict a lady," he said, with evident embarrassment in his voice. "I will say, though, that we each most certainly appreciate the

other's superior qualities, and we do not seem, at least unduly, inflated over our own, but do you know," he was assuming once more that air of easy self-possession, "I have a most unsatisfied nature. I am not willing to cry 'quits' till I get the best of an opponent."

"Well," she said, challengingly.

"You are the most beautiful woman here to-night," he said, with a sort of daring candor in his manner. "Now what can you answer?"

"I think your assertion entirely too presumptuous, Mr. Douglass," she replied, quickly. "You have no right to make that claim for me. One man's opinion is worth very little among a multitude. It would take a majority of votes to prove the truth of your statement, so I cannot accept it."

He looked at her, open admiration in his glance.

"I confess myself vanquished, and lower my colors," he said.

"It is as great an art to surrender gracefully as to conquer," she replied, consolingly. Then she saw Mrs. Pierson coming toward them. The slight elevation of the head, the half droop of the eyelids, token of grave conceit, always sent the blood rushing defiantly through Margaret's veins, whenever she came in contact with Douglass' sister.

"Miss Stewart, your cousin Katheryn was inquiring for you a few moments ago," she announced in measured tones, but she fastened her

eyes on her brother. "I said," she continued, "if I should see you I would send you over to her. She is somewhat bored with Judge Chatterton, I believe. I thought—"

"That Miss Stewart could help her out," finished Douglass, deep annoyance observable in his tones.

"The Judge is effusively fond of young people," remarked Mrs. Pierson, ignoring her brother's words, and this time addressing herself to Margaret.

Quick to divine Mrs. Pierson's evident intention of breaking up Margaret's *tete-a-tete* with Douglass, the girl was too independent to hesitate a moment as to her action. She excused herself and was half way across the room before Douglass realized that she was not by his side.

As Margaret, still smarting under the indignity she felt had been offered her, passed into the next room, she saw Phillip over by the piano, and Mrs. Dearborne was pratting away at his side. He was looking down on her petite figure, seemingly quite content to be thus entertained. The tableaux seemed to add to her present irritability.

"How can Phillip be amused with that woman!" she said to herself, half angrily. But others that evening beside Margaret thought that the Major's wife had bewitched the handsome young medical student.

As soon as Margaret had joined Katheryn and the judge, Katheryn began to look for an opportun-

great danger connected with its successful accom-

ity to escape from her persent thralldom. She had been following Phillip with longing eyes for fully twenty minutes and had grown desperate. Both Phoebe and Sara Chatterton had tried to block Mrs. Dearborne's little game, but, wearied at last, had retired from the field. Even Miss Isham, after being kindly given the slip by the Rev. Harcourt, though she had rolled her eyes imploringly at Phillip, had been unable to dislodge the enemy or gain possession of the captive. At the moment of Margaret's arrival, however, Katheryn saw that Mrs. Dearborne was engaged in conversation with Aubrey Lawrence. She slipped from her companions and was at Phillip's side in a moment.

"Mr. Vail," she said, "I want to introduce you to a dear friend of mine, who is in perfect spasms to meet you."

"So bad as that?" he asked.

"Yes, quite as bad, so no time can be lost. Mrs. Dearborne will not object to your leaving on an errand of mercy."

Miss Wilby, to whom Phillip was thus suddenly piloted was petite of figure and of the blonde type. She gushed over Phillip as if she had known him all her life.

"I told Miss Lansdowne, I was wild to meet you, Mr. Vail," she announced before the introduction had fairly ended. "It was love at first sight. Do you know I simply adore dark men and loathe blonds? Isn't that funny? I have always pined

for black hair," pushing back her own fair locks that they might glisten effectively. "O, Katheryn, there comes mamma. I know she is going to tell me how horribly impolite I was to run off from Mr. Boskin, but really, dear, he is just a little dangerous. He has been at the champagne punch all evening and trips over every other person he meets."

Phillip was so thoroughly disgusted with the girl's silliness that he mentally determined to quit the whole affair as soon as he could see Margaret and bid good-night; but he was not destined to carry out his determination without some further delay. He noted with prophetical misgivings the matron now nearing her course toward him.

Mrs. Wilby was a woman verging toward the meridian of life and was decidedly inclined to embonpoint. She flashed with diamonds and rustled with silks.

"Mamma, darling, please don't scold me for running off from Mr. Boskin. I was so unmercifully bored, you know," exclaimed Miss Wilby at sight of her mother. "Let me introduce Mr. Vail, mamma, Miss Stewart's cousin. He is studying medicine here."

In spite of Miss Wilby's fearfulness of her mother's ire, Phillip could not see any cause for alarm, as that lady appeared to be in the best of humors.

"I am very pleased to meet you, Mr. Vail," she said, in a voice slightly masculine in quality. "We

are always glad to see new faces in Beechdale. Both my husband and myself adore young people. I hope we will have the pleasure of welcoming you to our home some time in the near future. Telephone us any afternoon. Mabelle will arrange to be at home. Come to dinner; that would be better, and spend the evening with us."

"Do promise, now, won't you, Mr. Vail?" pleaded Miss Wilby. "Katheryn will let you off, won't you, dear? You see I can't invite Katheryn or even your cousin, for I want you all to myself," meltingly. "Katheryn and I are learning to smoke cigarettes. I will show you how well up in the art I am. We have a club, and practise three hours every week."

"My darling, Mr. Vail will think you the wickedest girl he ever knew," broke in Mrs. Wilby, in an admonishing tone of voice, but an admiring glance from her eye.

"Will you come, Mr. Vail? Do promise, or I can't sleep a wink tonight," implored Miss Wilby.

"There are many pleasures in which I would like to join this winter, but it will be quite impossible for me to do so, if I accomplish the work I have mapped out for myself. I fear to make any promise for the near future."

Katheryn was elated when she saw that her friend could obtain no definite answer from Phillip. She had begun to fear that her scheme of getting Phillip away from his late siren might in the end work her

more harm in another direction. Several others gathered around at this juncture and Phillip, chancing to see Margaret standing alone, went toward her.

"Margaret!"—he never, except in jest, called her by this name when they were alone; it gave her pain—"I think I will go. I have had quite enough of this for one evening."

"Phillip, I am so sorry we could not have been together more. Mr. Douglass has asked me to go out to supper with him, but he would be only too glad to have you, too, I know. He will be here in a moment."

"Very likely! Men are not so generous," he said a little bitterly. "No, I guess I will go and tell the hostess what a delightful evening I have had, and what a moral effort it takes to tear myself away, but that duty calls. How is that for a novice in society's vernacular? Am I not an apt scholar?" He gave a forced, reckless laugh. The sound of it, so unlike Phillip's spontaneous outflow of mirth, sent a chill through Margaret. She looked at him wonderingly, perplexed.

"I have some work for tomorrow still to do," he added, in a more natural tone, for he saw the pained expression creeping into her eyes.

"There is Mrs. Dearborne coming after me!" he exclaimed. "I declare I never saw such a place. A fellow would certainly have several proposals if he remained all evening, beside incidental invita-

tions to elope. I will go now and pay my parting respects and get out of such dangerous company before I do anything rash." He put out his hand and clasped hers. He noticed that it was cold and that it trembled in his own.

"Good-bye," he said, and smiled in the old frank way, as he left her.

The rest of the evening dragged wearily for Margaret. A fear that Phillip, notwithstanding his last few words, was annoyed at her for something, weighed upon her with a strange sense of loss. The days of confidence and companionship seemed suddenly to have gone forever. She attempted vainly to free herself of such forbodings and to become interested in the scenes about her. She felt as one moving aimlessly about, whose real self—the living, thinking self—was drawn by some external influence to a different sphere of action. Not until the close of the evening did she become, even partially, readjusted to her surroundings.

Douglass was bidding her good-night, and they were standing a few moments alone.

"I have enjoyed the evening more than I can express, Miss Stewart," he said, earnestly. "If I never experience another such, it will remain with me as one of the few pure, green spots that come in the waste of life."

A passionate surge of words pressed for utterance, but a strange sense of remoteness from her seemed to freeze them on his lips.

"If—if I should never be quite so happy as I have been tonight—we never know when we have reached the pinnacle of our joys—if that were so, would you forgive me if I took one of these buds I gave you? It seems unmannerly to ask for the return of a gift, does it not?"

"O, don't apologize, Mr. Douglass, I shall be only too glad to show my appreciation of your gift by granting the first wish you have ever expressed to me. Which will you have?"

She bent her head to look at them. The movement rushed one fair bud, just opening, against her lips. He put his hand out instantly and touched it.

"This one if—if I may," he answered.

"It is yours; take it," she said softly.

"Thank you!" He drew it gently from its resting place and held out his hand to her.

"Good-night."

CHAPTER XXIII.

SOCIAL REPORTING.

ELINOIR rushed into Margaret's room the next morning, before the latter had fairly opened her eyes to the sunlight of another day.

"Margaret!" she burst out excitedly, "here is the account of the reception in the *Herald*. Let me read it."

It was the one solitary occasion when Margaret could have been accused of a desire for "a little more sleep and a little more slumber." She rubbed her eyes, however, and tried to quicken her deadened senses, while Elinoir read in an excited treble the *Herald's* account of the affair of the previous evening.

"Mrs. Frances Lansdowne's tea and musicale was a delightful social event of yesterday. As has been previously stated in these columns, it was the occasion of presenting her young daughter, Miss Elinoir, to society, and of announcing Miss Yzabel's engagement to Mr. Fletcher Chatterton, son of Judge Chatterton, and a rising young attorney. Both young girls inherit the charming grace, as well as the brilliant mind, of their mother, and the brains and beauty of the social world—masculine and feminine—turned out to do honor to the event.

Mr. and Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne, who, by the way, are expected home from abroad at an early date, have reason indeed to be very proud of their beautiful nieces. The delightful informalities which always characterize Mrs. Lansdowne's 'at homes,' marked this affair, also.

"Mrs. Lansdowne wore a Frenchy costume of pale green crepe de chene, with bodice of violet velvet, and garniture of rare lace. She fairly divided the honors with her handsome daughters. The young debutante wore a dreamy creation of white chiffon over silk, and trimmed in lace, worn by her great-grandmother. She looked a very queen among roses as she stood with her fair arms full of American Beauties. The profusion of flowers received by her yesterday was conclusive evidence of the esteem in which she is held by her host of young friends.

"Mr. Chatterton's sweet fiancée bore her blushing honors as became one of the House of Lansdowne. She was gowned in pale blue taffeta, which set off her fair hair and delicate coloring to perfection. Miss Katheryn, never looked more bewitching than she did yesterday, in a pink embroidered silk grenadine over pink taffeta. Miss Lansdowne and Miss Chatterton, both in pink, presided over the chocolate table in the early part of the afternoon. Assisting also in the entertainment of the geusts and making themselves fascinating throughout the rooms, were Miss Stewart and

Miss Sara Chatterton, together with a bevy of last year's debutantes. Miss Stewart is a niece of Mrs. Lansdowne's and a gloriously beautiful girl. She is a descendant on her father's side of the royal Stewart blood.

"Miss Maud, the youngest daughter of the house, came in for an hour or so in the afternoon to meet her mother's friends and looked very sweet and shy in simple white with a string of pearls about her throat. Mrs. Aubrey Lawrence sang several selections during the evening, and, of course, as she always does, sang divinely. Among the 'crush' were noticed: Mrs. Chatterton, handsome in wine velvet with diamond ornaments. Both she and the Judge were looking supremely happy over the coming alliance which will unite the two foremost families of Beechdale—Lansdowne and Chatterton.

"Mrs. Dearborne was as fascinating as ever and wore an imported costume which only made more evident the countless charms of the winsome little foreigner. Mrs. Pierson looked very stately in black and white satin and diamond tiara in her beautiful hair. Mrs. Dr. Winthrop wore black lace and sapphire ornaments.

"There were also present—but where's the use of reading a whole string of names? That isn't particularly entertaining to us," exclaimed Elinoir. "That will be of more interest to other people, who will be anxious to know whether they were men-

tioned. There are about four classes at every swell affair," she went on, glibly. "First, the people who give the affair and their assistants—like mamma and all us girls, for instance, and you and Sara and Phoebe. We all received the most notice, you see. Next comes a few bon-tons, with a line or two each; then a list of all the prominent society people, and at the end 'and others.' Of course, that means all the rest who get there by the skin of their teeth, you know. Perhaps the hostess is under some obligations to them, or quite as often they are some poor relations, who did not have sense enough to know they were not wanted, even though an invitation was sent to them. Anyway, these 'unmentionables' are seldom seen in society. When the list is given the reporter, of course, she knows just how to size them up. It's quite an art, though, I tell you." She took the paper once more and looked at the article she had just read.

"That's an awfully nice description of me, isn't it?" she asked. "Miss Burton is just perfectly sweet, anyway. Mrs. Chatterton said the other day to mamma that if everybody did not know Miss Burton to be only a reporter she could deceive lots of people—that is, she might be taken for—for one of the real nobility, you know. With this very complimentary estimate of Miss Burton's personality, Elinoir withdrew as unceremoniously as she had entered.

Margaret lay back upon her pillows and pressed

one rounded arm upon her aching head.

"The real nobility," she repeated, half aloud. "If such estimates are true, why should my soul so passionately deny it. Could I be happy living so, day after day, with no striving except this vain striving with each other? Father, darling mother, Phillip! You cannot all have been mistaken." She turned over with a little weary moan and lay quiet with her face buried in her hands.

When she went downstairs, nearly an hour later, the family were not yet astir. She breakfasted alone and then walked out into the warm sunshine. She turned her steps to a favorite spot in the picturesque little park near by. The beauty, the serenity of the place sank soothingy into her heart. After a few turns up and down through the park she came back to sit where a fountain played and sparkled in its marble basin. For the first time an inscription on the base of the fountain attracted her notice, though it was not the first time she had rested in the same place. She arose and stepped nearer to read it:

Given to the people of Beechdale
by
Malcolm James Douglass,
January 1, 1870.

"I wonder if it can be Mr. Douglass' father," she reflected. As if she had the power to summon one who could best answer her inquiries, she

turned at the sound of approaching footsteps and turned herself face to face with Douglass. "You are out early, after the dissipations of yesterday, aren't you?" he asked, smiling, and with his hand extended as he came toward her.

"Habit is a strong master," she replied. "I cannot sleep late, however tired I may be, and this park is so lovely, and restful," leaning her head with a sigh of satisfaction against the back of the rustic bench.

"It is a pretty little spot," he remarked, as though recognizing the fact of its attractiveness for the first time. She wondered whether familiarity with beauty, as with deformity, could ever breed indifference.

"O, have you never realized the fact before, Mr. Douglass?" she asked.

"I have made but poor use of my eyes all these years, if that were so," he answered, evasively.

"But there is such a difference, do you not think so, between simply being aware of the existence of beauty and having a sympathetic appreciation of it. I love to think God breathes upon us, as it were, through his universe—that wherever beauty is, there is God; that beauty is indeed God, the express image of His Spirit. I believe that if I were blind and I should be placed anywhere in the midst of such fairness, I should know it instantly. It would become at once as something

tangible." Her face seemed to him to glow for a moment with an ethereal glory.

"I should like to be your pupil for a little while," he said, with sincerity in his voice. "I see how one might be very happy believing as you do. I am something of a skeptic, though. Do you imagine I could ever learn?" The half-amused, half cynical smile she knew so well was once more upon his lips and in his eyes.

"You might," she said, "that is, if you could ever really think seriously of anything."

"Truly, Miss Stewart, I was never more serious in my life than when I asked the question. Though I confess my æsthetic faculty has been somewhat blunted, I can still both see and feel surpassing loveliness when fortune kindly throws it in my way."

She could not, with her quick woman's intuition, misinterpret the meaning behind his words. He was leaning over the back of her settee and looking down at her with all his heart in his eyes. A tiny twig fell from the tree above them, snapped off by a songster overhead. It fell entangled in the soft hair about her face. Douglass drew it from the red-brown meshes, gently, as a mother might have done.

"Thank you," she said, looking at him with a smile. But there was that in the tense expression of his face, the compressed lips, that sent the blood rushing tumultuously through her veins.

She turned her eyes from him confusedly and arose. Some one was coming quickly up the walk. "Why, there is Mrs. Dearborne," she cried. She started toward her with a genuine smile of welcome on her lips. She could welcome even the Major's wife to free her from her present embarrassment.

"How fortunate to find you here, Mr. Douglass," exclaimed Mrs. Dearborne. "The Major, poor man, has been telephoning to you at the club, and I don't know where all. He wished to make an appointment—some church affair, I believe. They want to invest you with a new title—Junior Wardenship. I met Mrs. Lawrence a few moments ago. I happened to mention the Major's predicament. She had just passed by and had seen you and Miss Stewart in here. So I came right along. I will not spoil your *tete-a-tete*—not for the world. I would not be so cruel."

She gave so many significant nods and glances that Margaret was irritated almost beyond endurance.

"Call at the Major's office some time today, Mr. Douglass. Good-bye, my woodland daisy. You did look so beautiful yesterday! Ah, do not look cross! You do not like compliments? Well, never mind, I will not trespass again. Tell your cousin, though, I fell in love with him last night. O, he is so handsome and fascinating. The Major

was quite jealous. Indeed, he was! Well, good-bye."

Margaret tried not to show how extremely annoyed she was by Mrs. Dearborne's remarks, and when the little woman flittered away she felt the need of a theme for immediate conversation in order to alter her humor.

Fortunately her eyes fell once more on the inscription. "Is that your father's name?" she asked, walking toward the fountain with a quick, nervous step. She examined it with almost extravagantly absorbing interest.

"Yes, my father presented both the fountain and the park grounds. He was very proud of Beechdale and more proud still of its conservatism. I should not wonder if the old gentleman"—tapping the inscription lightly with his cane—"had been rather hard to suit on the other side. Unless he were introduced to a very exclusive set of old residents, I am afraid he would be, ah—just a little bored."

The absence of feeling and even of natural respect in his words disappointed her; but the evident lack of sympathy for his father's pride which the covert sarcasm in his voice and words plainly indicated, counteracted the unfavorable impression produced at first.

Douglass felt that in some way he had ventured too far. He hastened to redeem himself in her eyes.

"I have shocked you unmercifully, I am sure, Miss Stewart. The trouble is I have not been associated with such women as you. I forget that repartee and wholesome sarcasm are not always acceptable. This sort of coin never fails to pass in Beechdale, you know. Seriousness in any shape or form is below par. By the way, to change the subject, did my sister call the other day?"

"Not that I know."

"She fully intended to. Something doubtless hindered. You should be great friends," he continued, a wicked twinkle creeping into his blue eyes. "You, too, are a descendant of royalty, I believe. My sister is trying to organize a branch of the 'Order of the Crown.' You may not have suspected it, but really, there is quite a respectable number of elegibles in Beechdale."

"O, Mr. Douglass, please, please do not think I had anything to do with that report. There is not an atom of truth in it. For all I know I am just a true American, and I glory in it. I might be descended from all the royal blood of Europe taken together and I would still be what I am, myself—no more, no less."

She looked so truly noble, as she spoke, and yet so absolutely free from every taint of false pride, so perfect a realization of American womanhood, that he lifted his hat reverently and bowed to her as she stood there.

"Men would be better, homes would be hap-

pier, our country safer, if there were more women such as you."

They stood for a moment silent, busy with their own thoughts; then Douglass said:

"I am glad I met you here this morning. You are an ideal teacher, Miss Stewart, for one learns his lesson before he is aware."

The bells sounded the noon hour from the Church of Our Lady.

"How quickly the time has passed—and I feel quite myself again," she exclaimed. "But I must go now. The family will not know what has become of me."

"I will see you again tonight at Mrs. Chatterton's dance, will I not?" he asked.

"If I am not too tired."

CHAPTER XXIV.

RICH AND WRETCHED.

FOR nearly two weeks after Mrs. Lansdowne's tea Margaret lived in a whirl of excitement. The season was now fairly entered upon, and with receiving calls and attending both afternoon and evening affairs, there was little time left which was unoccupied. Phillip had been up twice, but both calls had proved rather unsatisfactory to him, for he had unfortunately happened in when several others were claiming Margaret's attention.

She had planned on several occasions to go with Phillip to call on Mrs. Lawrence. Margaret had been very enthusiastic in her praises of her friend and was anxious that Phillip should meet the sweet singer in her own home. But as yet they had not been able to agree upon a time convenient to both, and Phillip had at last suggested that they should wait until later, when both might have more leisure.

A few days after this decision, Margaret received a note from her friend. It read:

"My Dear Miss Stewart—You remember you promised to come over sometime when I was particularly 'blue,' if I should let you know. I have

not been well for several days, and I have the feeling that you could help me. Will you come?

GERTRUDE N. LAWRENCE."

"Aunt Frances, I think I will change my mind about going with Katheryn to the club this afternoon. I have received a note from Mrs. Lawrence and she begs me to come over. She is not feeling well and I do not like to refuse her. Another time for the club will do."

"O, very well, my dear, I will not try to interfere with what you believe to be your duty," replied Mrs. Lansdowne magnanimously, and Margaret encountered no more serious opposition from Katheryn when she informed her of her altered plans.

Half-past two found Margaret on her way to the Elms, and on her arrival there she was directed at once to Mrs. Lawrence's private sitting room. The door was thrown open before Margaret had reached the hallway leading to it.

"The maid directed me to come upstairs," Margaret said, as she met her fair young hostess.

"Yes, I wanted you to feel perfectly at home. We will have a much cosier time here, safe from intrusion. I am so pleased to have you. I felt almost conscience stricken though, after I had written to you. This round of gayety is very hard on one at first, especially so when one has lived the quiet, refreshing life which you have lived."

"Do not give yourself the slightest anxiety as to that. I had a good night's rest and a little saunter in the park this morning. I love to steal away by myself and breathe in the delicious air. What a contrast it is to the heat of drawing rooms!"

Mrs. Lawrence smiled and then she said—"I am afraid, Mr. Douglass must bore you considerably, if you care to be alone. He seems to haunt that park mornings. I often see him there when I take my morning drive."

"O, no, Mr. Douglass never wearies me, but he is about the only man I have met here of whom I can say that I enjoy his conversation. I am always relieved when he appears at social companies. I should be insufferably bored many times, I fear, if he were not there."

"Yes, Mr. Douglass is certainly a man quite superior intellectually," Mrs. Lawrence remarked.

"It would not be altogether so absurdly ridiculous—this society life—if it did not seem to be lived with such tragic earnestness," Margaret continued.

The two women were seated side by side on a cushioned divan. Gertrude Lawrence put out her hand and laid it in the other's lap. The action seemed to have in it a mute appeal for sympathy—a declaration of loneliness. Margaret instinctively covered it with her own.

"Would you be unhappy if such a life were yours, Miss Stewart? Might you not in time become at-

tracted instead of repulsed by it? Position, wealth, influence cannot all together be despised, do you think so?" Though the voice suggested tranquility of mind, there was a tense expression in the eyes that contradicted belief in an inner repose.

"You misunderstand, Mrs. Lawrence. I—"

"Call me Gertrude!" entreated Mrs. Lawrence.

"I should be happy to do so, if I may be Margaret to you." Mrs. Lawrence smiled, and moved a little more closely to the young girl's side.

"You misunderstand me, Gertrude, I am sure," repeated Margaret. "It is not social position—not wealth, not influence that I would denounce. It is the deplorable use made of them. These things should be cables to lift men to the stars; instead, they are forged into chains of envy, profligacy and tyranny and hold men in the dust."

Margaret saw the altered expression of her companion's face. The tender look faded out and in its place was settling the old one of mingled despair and resignation. Something within Margaret's heart clamored for a revelation of the heart of this woman, not out of any vulgar curiosity, but because of a longing to help. Often since she had come to know Gertrude Lawrence there had been moments when, their eyes meeting, this desire had been mutely asked for and answered. To Margaret the answer had always seemed to be "I cannot speak!" But, sitting now close by Gertrude's

side, their hands entwined within each other's, and speaking as lips can never speak, Margaret ventured to break the silence she had heretofore imposed upon herself.

"Gertrude, has happiness come to you?"

In a moment all Gertrude Lawrence's composure slipped from her. She was bereft at a word of the armor that had heretofore concealed every vulnerable point of her inner nature.

"No, no, my God, no!" she moaned.

Margaret, alarmed at the effect her words had produced, hastened by those little, silent expressions of love and sympathy which are so instinctive to a noble heart, to calm Gertrude's violent agitation. Then the unhappy woman, raising her head, looked into the dark, limpid, pitying eyes bent upon her.

"Let me sit here," she said, rising and taking a seat on a hassock at Margaret's feet. "I must talk to you—the time has come—but I would look into your face to find the strength there which I need. Do you see that Madonna? Ah, I think I can sympathize with the millions of wretched women who are drawn to the feet of Mary. It is the yearning heart-cry for a pure and noble woman's love." Margaret pressed the hand in hers gently, lovingly, but did not speak.

"Forgive me, Margaret, for bringing you here only to pain your sensitive soul, but—somehow—I felt I must do so. I wanted to tell you the story of

my life, because—because—well it does not matter why, you only need to know that I am wretched, very wretched."

"I came to comfort you in any way I could, dear," answered Margaret, tenderly. "I gathered from your note that you were unusually depressed, and I hoped that companionship, even if it were powerless to do much, might help to drive away the gloom. Do not feel that you are asking a favor when you ask help from me. It is a joyous privilege, for which I have many times yearned."

"Ah, perhaps," said Gertrude, quickly and remorsefully, "I may have treated you at times more coldly than my real feelings would have dictated, but from our first meeting I felt humbled in your presence. The hauteur, or gayety, affected in the presence of others, I was assured would be detected by you. Believe me, this seeming indifference resulted not because I was not drawn to you, but because I dreaded the revelation consequent upon intimacy. You see me surrounded by everything that is generally supposed to satisfy even a woman; yet I do not know what the word 'satisfy' means. It is true, I was not born to the social sphere I now occupy. Some might insist that in this fact could be traced the cause for my unhappiness. But I was brought up among educated and refined people.

"When I was a child I showed a marked talent for singing, and it was the cherished hope of my

parents, that when the proper time came I might develop this gift. I studied for a while under professors in my own city and then went to New York to continue my work. I was so encouraged there that later arrangements were made for me to go abroad. I remained a year, and on returning I had a flattering offer in New York, which I accepted. Though there I enjoyed a success far beyond my wildest dreams, my heart cried out for home. I became convinced that real affection was more priceless than the praises of strangers.

"I was welcomed with every demonstration of appreciation in my own city, and I felt that my happiness was complete. That winter I met Mr. Lawrence at a charity entertainment. He was handsome, gallant and entertaining. There was personal magnetism about him, too, that fascinated me.

"He asked me if he might call at my home. I readily gave my consent, and he lost no time in taking advantage of the permission I had granted. My father and mother, delighted both with his distinguished appearance and winning manners, encouraged the intimacy. I myself was flattered with the attentions of one, who, I know, could have had his choice of perhaps any girl in Philadelphia; yet he had chosen me. But my heart was not his, though I often tried to think it was. Another face—the face of one who had loved me since my school days—stood always between us

in mute appeal. He had left his home while I was in New York, to take a position in a western city. During his absence, we had corresponded regularly.

"To Mr. Lawrence's impassioned appeals, for he soon gave expresssion to his love for me, I gave no definite response. I could not understand myself yet. When I was with him the intoxication of his mad love thrilled me through and through; yet, strangely enough, his absence never brought to me the sense of loneliness and emptiness which my heart said should exist.

"My parents supplemented his pleadings with their own urgings. My mother pictured to me the home of luxury over which I should preside, the honored and influential name I should bear and the place I should hold in the social world. 'And I—what am I to give him in return for all these gifts, I asked in dismay,' 'Your youth, your beauty, your voice,' she replied, and—God forgive me! I yielded."

She buried her face in her hands, and for a moment strove bravely with her emotions. When she lifted her head once more her eyes burned with unnatural brilliancy, but she was calm.

"After our marriage," she continued, "we spent six months abroad, and in the meantime this house was being fitted for our use. But when we returned our halcyon days had vanished! Mr. Lawrence's family, while they made a formal attempt

to meet me cordially, revealed unmistakably in their manner and often in sarcastic remarks, their real feeling toward me. I at once saw that they felt he had married beneath him. An ancestral tree hung in their library, while I possessed only the scanty records of three generations, wealth had long been in their family only competency in mine. The youth, the beauty and the talent were, as I feared, not sufficient to counterbalance the possessions into which I had come.

"Still, I was Aubrey Lawrence's wife and as such society fawned and smiled upon me. I was applauded for my voice, I was flattered for my beauty. At the end of another year our little girl was born, and the anguish that had been pressing on my heart was quieted for the time by baby fingers; but a new and crueler stroke awaited. My husband's ardor began to cool. He was bitterly disappointed that an heir to the Lawrence name had not been born, and he seemed to have no place in his heart for the little stranger that had come to our saddened home. Gratification, too, was doing its deadening work. No desire of his had ever gone unsatisfied. His feeling for me sprang, not from true love, but mad impulse. Until he had gained possesssion of me, his latest toy, it was the one thing he could not live without. When desire was gratified, his passion began to abate.

"O, those wretched, wretched days, and yet more wretched ones were to follow." She shuddered, as

if the agony of the past was upon her anew. Margaret bent down to touch her lips to the burning cheek. Gertrude flung out her arms with a sudden passionate gesture.

"Don't, don't," she cried, with wild entreaty in her face. "Don't touch your lips to mine until you have heard all—all the miserable story. Let me," raising her own eyes to the clear, sweet ones bent upon her, "let me just see you look at me for one little moment, so, then I can bear your accusing glances better. Don't speak, dear, don't! I must go on while I have the courage. Listen, I am calmer now. Soon a report came to me from jealous tongues, jealous because I had so easily captured the prize they had once tried in vain to win, that my husband was not true. I could not, dared not, believe it at first. I kept my own counsels, tried to smile down all my lurking doubts and swept through the crowds with head unbowed. My suspicions, once aroused, however, would not be put entirely down. I began to investigate for myself. I found the report only too true. My husband—the man to whom I had given myself, pure and undefiled, was a monster of corrupted villany; but here lay the difference which separated Aubrey Lawrence from the scoundrels that are ostracized from good society—he was rich, well and widely connected and, as the world counts, nobly descended.

"When I knew the whole dreadful truth I went

to him with it. I feared his anger, but I had no need. Instead of going into a violent passion, as I had seen him do on a much slighter provocation, he laughed it off, as one might an idle tale. He told me that I was an unsophisticated girl; that all men had to sow their wild oats; he was not worse than others. 'We will get on nicely,' he said, 'when we have come to a better understanding.' He thought we had been married long enough for romanticism to have passed. He told me that he did not wish to make a slave of me, as some men did of their wives; neither did he desire to be made a slave of; that neither one would call the other to task; that I was to be a sensible wife, and he would be an indulgent husband. 'All that heart can wish for is yours for the asking,' he said. O, my God—all that heart could wish for! If he could have seen the awful despair in that heart then!"

"When that interview was ended, I was a changed woman. A new life began for me that day. I think, ah, it is terrible to say it, but I think I should have ended it, had it not been for a baby's voice and a baby's dimpled fingers that somehow drew me back from the terrible sin I contemplated.

"I tried to live for her—to plan for her, and life after a while seemed to be not altogether aimless. But the tyranny of social custom snatched even this remaining joy from my detaining fingers. My husband and my husband's people became alarmed at my plebeian inclinations. They hinted it at first—then spoke out plainly. I had my baby too much

with me. A French nurse, more responsible than the one I had, was procured, and the thousand little acts of love a mother so delights to perform had to be relinquished. Soon my heart was forced to see my little one turn with greater delight to her nurse than to her mother.

"One day, smarting more keenly than usual under this cruel and growing separation from my child, I threw on my wraps and started out. I did not care where I went; I only longed to get away from the home which was a prison to me. Hardly knowing what I did, I stepped on a car and rode to Leyton. When I alighted I thought I saw a familiar figure in front of me. The figure—it was a man's—turned suddenly in my direction. We stood face to face—I and the man to whom I had given—ah, I knew it now—my first and true love. He looked ten years older, so sad and worn. In the one look we exchanged our souls crossed the awful gulf that lay between us.

"There is no need to tell all—all the miserable truth, but, O, Margaret, my friend, remember, remember, when you judge me, how starved I was for human love. Away from parents whom my husband did not care for me to see too frequently, robbed virtually of my baby and despising my husband, was there not reason for what followed?

"I revealed all my bitter story to the man who had loved and loved me still. He had come that day to Leyton on business, but not long after he sought

and obtained a position in Leyton. We met often, and though at first we tried to delude ourselves with the belief that it was merely as friends, the thin disguise of friendship could not long hide the truth that love, blind, reckless love was behind it.

"Then scandal did its blighting work. Strangely enough, though perhaps it was the irony of retribution, the story reached my husband's ears through the woman who had wronged me. He taunted me with and accused me of being on a plane with himself in baseness. I protested. Before we parted he made me promise that I would never attempt an open separation. His noble name, he declared, should not be so dishonored. We would live hereafter, since I desired it, two separate lives. He would not interfere with any affair of the heart in which I was concerned, if I would allow the same privilege to him. The crimson roses yonder and similar ones which you have seen me wear are proofs that the contract has been kept. Each day they greet my eyes and lay upon my breast the silent messages of a love which I have no moral right to give; and, heaven pity me! I have gloried until I met you in flaunting them before my husband's face.

"O, Margaret," she moaned, "what must I do? Tell me, tell me," she cried, clutching wildly at the girl's arm. "You are pure and good and noble—would you live as I am living? Would you allow your child to grow to womanhood to blush some

day at her mother's name? Could you endure to see your little one live and grow within a sin-polluted home? Can she be true and noble with such a father and such a mother? Have I a right to steal into her nursery at night and press a kiss on her pure mouth? Tell me, tell me the truth!"

Margaret looked at the wild-eyed woman at her feet. She knew that even had she been able to collect her thoughts sufficiently to advise her, Gertrude Lawrence was in no condition to listen calmly to her. The awful strain was telling fearfully on the frail organism. The white hands pressed in Margaret's were cold as in death, the lips and cheeks were bloodless.

"Gertrude, let me help you to the couch. You are far too excited to talk any more now. When you are calmer we will talk it over together. I, too, dear must have a little time to think. I have never been called to answer so grave a question as this you have asked me."

She bent over the despairing figure and imprinted a kiss. Gertrude lifted her head. A look of sad wonder crept into the haggard eyes.

"You still would kiss me—after all I have told you?" she faltered.

For answer Margaret repeated the caress, then with infinite tenderness in her touch, she led Gertrude to the couch, and sitting down beside her drew the fair head to her breast. The merciful dulling of senses that follows undue strain upon

the nerves was fast approaching. The heavy lids closed over the lustreless eyes. Gertrude Lawrence slept.

An hour passed away. The shadows were deepening in the room. A servant entered to light the lamp. Then Margaret disengaged herself from the sleeper's arms, and putting on her wraps passed noiselessly into the hall. There she met Annette coming from the nursery. "Annette," she said, "Mrs. Lawrence has been suffering this afternoon. I persuaded her to lie down, and she has fallen asleep. I did not wish to disturb her. Tell her, please, when she awakes that I will return sometime tomorrow to see how she is." The girl made a little courtesy.

"I am sorry madame ees not well again," she replied with a nod of her jauntily-bedecked head.

CHAPTER XXV.

MOURNING.

WHEN Margaret entered her aunt's house she felt almost instantly that something out of the ordinary had happened. Betty wore a look upon her face that suggested to the observer "I know something I could tell!" and there was the sound of quick walking overhead mingled with the low murmur of voices from her aunt's room. No one was in the library, though it was near the dinner hour. Margaret hastened upstairs, and Maud, wide-eyed and excited, met her at the landing.

"Margaret!" she exclaimed, "guess the news we've had since you went away. Cousin Hortense is dead and Aunt Clarissa and Uncle William and cousin Roger are coming home with the body. We're all to dress in mourning, Margaret. I am, too, and we're to give our old clothes to the poor people of the parish, mamma says so." Then in an attempted whisper—"Mamma nearly had hysterics. Katheryn had to bathe her face with eau de cologne for the longest time. Do you want to come in? Yzabel has gone over to the Chattertons to

tell Fletcher she can't get up the theatre party now. Isn't that mean?"

Margaret entered Mrs. Lansdowne's room and found her aunt stretched upon the couch, her hair wildly disheveled, a cut glass smelling salts bottle in one hand and a black imported fan in the other.

"My dear Margaret, I suppose you have heard the terrible news," began Mrs. Lansdowne in lachrimose tones while smelling salts was vigorously applied. Margaret nodded affirmatively. "And who would have thought it! Such a magnificent home, such a superior husband, descended from—from—O, my poor head. I can't think of anything! Whom was he descended from, Katheryn?"

"Lord Kadshorn, mamma."

"Thank you, my love. I remember now. I knew it was some of the nobility of England. Dear Hortense. She sent me this fan last Christmas—so thoughtful of her! I never dreamed that Christmas would be her last. Poor William and Clarissa —their only child—their all! O, what a wound to their ten-der hear-r-ts!" At this juncture Mrs. Lansdowne manifested dangerous symptoms of another hysterical paroxysm. Katheryn dashed a few drops of eau de cologne in her face, while Elinoir pressed the smelling salts to her mother's nostrils.

Margaret tried what she could do by way of soothing the highly-wrought woman, whose hysteria had now reached the stage when little spasmodic squeals were being sent forth at regular in-

tervals. Her efforts at last seemed of some avail, for her aunt became quieter and presently asked for a glass of claret to restore her shattered nerves.

"I haven't cried a tear," she explained, "not a tear since the news came. I had just returned from the French Club—O, no, what am I saying—it was the Civic League this afternoon, of course. I think you had better telephone to Dr. Winthrop, Elinoir. Tell him the awful news and explain in what a nervous state I am. I know it is a very bad symptom not to be able to cry. I have heard him say so. I think, Elinoir, he had better call around after his office hours this evening."

"Can I do anything more for you, Aunt Frances," inquired Margaret, kindly. "Shall I arrange your pillows more comfortably for you? Perhaps if we should turn down the lamp a little you might get some sleep."

"Yes, dear, you may! There, that is more comfortable. You are quite a nurse, child. Don't turn the lamp down, though. I am too nervous to sleep. I need something to occupy my mind. Katheryn, love, suppose you bring that last number of Le Bon Ton. It had some beautiful mourning costumes in it. One must think and plan, you know, even in the midst of sorrows. This is not the first time I have known the bitterness of that truth." She sighed deeply.

Margaret could hardly believe the evidence of her senses. Was it strange, she asked herself bit-

terly, that her aunt had been unable to weep? Could there be any depth of feeling when one could so easily dismiss a grief to consider the latest cuts in the habilliments of woe? She burned to express herself in language arrowed with keen reproof, yet she knew that such a course would be entirely lost on a woman of her aunt's nature. She excused herself soon, leaving Mrs. Lansdowne resting contentedly upon her pillows and as absorbed in the fashion sheet before her as if nothing of more consequence at the present time existed.

In the hall she met Yzabel just returned from the Chattertons.

"O, Margaret, of course you have heard the news; isn't it terrible?" she cried. "It's so unfortunate, too, that such a thing should happen right in the midst of the season and Elinoir's first year out. Fletcher is awfully cut up. Of course we will all go into mourning—mamma very deep. But"—very considerately—"it will be much harder on Uncle William and Aunt Clarissa than for us."

"Yes, I should suppose so," replied Margaret, significantly. She was their all. The blow must be a very heavy one to bear."

"Is mamma better, Margaret?"

"She is resting easily now, I think. As I could do nothing more, I was just going to my room for a few moments. The two girls separated, Yzabel going to her mother's chamber and her cousin seeking her own apartment.

Margaret Stewart's nature was not of the phlegmatic type which passes through the varying experiences of life without being to any appreciable degree changed thereby; her nature was one which the finger of time was daily fashioning into a yet higher and far more glorious sphere of activity, and this fashioning process involved mortal pangs as the immortal essence, little by little, was loosened from its sensuous and perishable environment. The rude awakening to a man's perfidy and a woman's equally sinful act of closing through her own weakness every natural avenue leading to self-development, was a shock too great to be realized even yet in all its awfulness. This violent disturbance taking place now in her moral nature was not, however, made possible because of any cloistered type of innocence. She was too familiar with human frailties to have believed the world a place of joy and guilelessness. Yet she had not dreamed that at the fountainhead of wealth, refinement and so-called culture there was to be found the very incarnation of sin and corruption; that rare opportunities had produced the most appalling vices, vices far more hideous because of their tinselled masquerading. This was a truth paralyzing to heart and brain.

She threw herself wearily upon the couch and tried to think. Before her mind's eye arose the picture of a beautiful woman—one who might have been a power for good in the world, yet living a

life false to the most sacred vows a woman is called to take, a life even if it had not yet, would lead to deeper sin, despair and perhaps death.

"O, God give me the wisdom to guide her aright!" she cried in a very agony of desire; but suddenly there came over her a sense of the incongruity of her situation. Who was she who had uttered such a prayer! The daughter of a farmer, herself rural bred, who, sickening at the ignorance, shiftlessness, lack of aspiration of the majority around her, had hoped to find a higher ideal in the sphere of refinement and intelligence. And what had she found? Instead, a deeper and more hopeless curse.

Where, she asked herself wearily, was to be found the wisdom she sought? The Almighty, she felt, gave not wisdom ready-made. He furnished the receptacle, experience filled it. In such attitude she had prayed. In such attitude she waited the answer, and from her own heart the answer came, uncompromising, convincing. She must first grasp the solemn truth that in the whole natural universe there is not to be found one drop of forgiveness; that every ignoble deed or thought breaks a merciless law and the breech calls for a penalty. Gertrude Lawrence had sinned and her sins would be the measure of her suffering. The question was primarily one of expiation—the highest and the truest.

So Margaret tried to work out a great ethical

problem, one that older and greater minds than hers had failed to solve in its entirety. Yet her attempt, as all such attempts, could not be without result. No moral or intellectual struggle is ever destitute of issue in the world of spiritual forces.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NEW PURPOSE.

MARGARET intended to drop in at Mrs. Lawrence's the morning following her short visit there, but she was obliged to relinquish this plan to accompany Katheryn on a shopping excursion to Leyton. Mrs. Lansdowne felt that no time should be lost in regard to the mourning gowns. The bereaved fam ily were expected shortly now, and the habilliments of woe must under no consideration be incomplete.

Margaret had fully expected to receive a note from Phillip that morning before going to Leyton, but the postman brought letters to her aunt's family only. She was deeply disappointed. It was the fifth day since she had seen Phillip, and when unable to call he had been in the habit of sending a note every few days just to tell her what he was doing. These little confidences were valued breaks in the monotonous whirl of excitement.

After luncheon she concluded to wait for the afternoon mail before making her postponed call, but she was again doomed to disappointment. She

began to fear that Phillip might be ill. With a heart by no means light she turned her steps toward the Elms.

At the gateway she met Annette starting out with little Dorothy. The child was seated in her go-cart shrouded so snugly in her white fur robes that nothing of her was visible except the little white-capped head. Margaret could not resist stopping to speak to the child. "Are you going out for a ride, Dorothy?" Dorothy smiled and looked toward Annette.

"Allez-vous promener en carosse?" repeated the nurse. Dorothy nodded.

"Eh bien! disez, 'Oui Madame.'"

The little rosebud lips framed the answer in baby accents.

"She understands not well Anglaise. I speak to her always *en Francaise*, mademoiselle. She ees *une petite Francaise enfant,"* explained the delighted maid.

"Well, she is a dear little girl whether French or English, I am sure," responded Margaret. As she proceeded up the walk to the grand and sombre mansion she thought its cold stateliness symbolic of lives behind the dark, carved doors.

Margaret found Mrs. Lawrence waiting impatiently for her. Laying her head on Margaret's shoulder she sighed:

"I thought you would never, never come. It has seemed so long." She drew the girl over to a luxu-

riously-pillowed window seat and sat down beside her.

Margaret noticed that her friend looked pale and worn. There were deep purple shadows underneath her eyes that spoke of an anxious and perhaps sleepless night. "I am so sorry, dear, but you received my note, did you not? I wanted to come, you know."

"O, yes, I knew it was quite impossible; I am so sorry, too, for poor Mr. and Mrs. Lansdowne and your aunt's family also. I grow impatient, however, over delays. I think this awful and constant submission to the inevitable keeps me in a state of irritation. I am not physically strong either, and yet I am obliged to meet countless demands of society. O, how I envy you your glad, free life. How glorious to do only what seems best for you to do. O, Margaret, Margaret, I am so wretched—so wretched. If I could only rest! Yet when can I find rest? Only in death, I believe. Sometimes I think that welcome release will come to me soon."

Margaret tried to dissipate such gloomy forebodings, but Gertrude only smiled, a sad, forced smile that seemed to say, "I am ready and longing for such relief."

"What you need, Gertrude, is a readjustment of your life, physically, mentally and morally."

"Too late! too late, now for that solution," sighed the despairing woman, pressing her hands upon her aching brow.

"You must not say so, dear! However intricate has been the path over which you have been wandering there is—there must be—a way back to hope, to truth, to purity. Margaret looked with sorrowful tenderness upon the silent, drooping figure at her side. She wondered if she comprehended the full force of her words.

"The way back," she went on slowly, "will not be easy. The sword will pierce your very heart, but—you *must* go back!" Gertrude Lawrence shuddered, but did not raise her head from her hands.

"Do you think it possible, Gertrude, to live this double life and not hopelessly corrupt your own nature and perhaps that of your child? Do not think, dear, I am hard, unfeeling; remember, I love you. You have been wronged—only God knows how terribly. You have suffered the deepest humiliation to which a woman can be subjected, but—listen, Gertrude—you are now in your turn wronging him whose name you bear."

Gertrude lifted her head and fierce denial flashed from eyes lately dimmed with grief.

Margaret put her arm around her companion's waist. "I know that this may seem unjust, severe," she said, "but listen! Your husband has fallen low, yet that does not mean that he cannot be wronged. Remember, Gertrude, those marriage vows—forsaking all others to cleave only unto him as long as you both shall live! He has made the strictest in-

terpretation of these words impossible for you by killing affection; yet still there remains a part for you to perform. While he is your husband no other man should come between you. You can neither honor or love him, but you can and must be true to him!"

"But Margaret," moaned the unhappy woman, "I love another, do you understand? Madly, hopelessly, it may be, but I love him! He has been the only power many times that has kept me from the crime of ending my own existence. Does that count for nothing?"

"He saved you from slaying your body, how about your soul, Gertrude? Will he save that? Which is the greater crime, to kill the body or warp the soul?" Gertrude winced under the words as under a surgeon's knife.

"Can you," went on her self-appointed torturer, "bend over that little bed at night in yonder and feel that you will always be able to meet the calm searching of your daughter's eyes? Could you, should God spare her life, when some day in indignation and perplexity she came to you with words of scandal she had heard, could you without the flush of shame on your cheek answer: 'My child, your father through all these years has been untrue to me and I have been untrue to him. We have been during this time husband and wife in name only. Another has my heart, and through all your young life has taken the place of your

father.' Can you think what such a revelation might mean to her? Do you see what mockery it would be ever to plead with her to shun the path her mother trod? Do you imagine that if you should try, out of a knowledge born of terrible experience, to tell her what a faithful wife and noble mother should be like, such words would carry any weight with them?"

A cry of mortal agony was wrung from the tormented heart. Two hands were raised imploringly as if to stop the accusing words. But Margaret went on: "And remember, Gertrude, her after life is being molded now in a polluted, loveless home. You believe in the reality of good? Then, in the name of that good, believe, too, in the awful reality of evil. Your child is breathing in each day the impurity which pervades this home. Every caress given her from her father is from impure lips; every clasp from her mother comes from arms that have trembled in the embraces to which they had neither legal or moral right. Stop! stop! where you are, first, for the sake of your own soul, next, for the sake of your child's. You who have wealth and education and talent, how can you answer for your lost, your wrecked opportunities! O, Gertrude, Gertrude, if I could make you see it as I see it, dear!" Then she put her arms around Gertrude's neck and pressed her lips upon the white pain-drawn forehead. Gertrude Lawrence felt as though an angel's lips had touched her for an in-

stant. Neither spoke. When at last the silence was broken, Gertrude said solemnly: "You have done for me more than the angels in heaven could have done. I stand, as it were, a culprit before the bar of my own higher life, condemned by my own blind, mad folly. My duty stands before me plainly marked. If I could; ah, if I could have the moral courage and"—she paused and pressed her hand again to her panting breast—"the physical strength to perform it! O, Margaret, tell me, do you think I could ever become a fit mother to my darling? Do you believe I could ever have the wisdom to teach her what is grandest and best?"

It was pitiful to see the hungry, longing look in the blue eyes.

"Do not have a fear, Gertrude," was the confident answer. "No human soul that deeply desired the true and the good ever failed to attain it. The law of spiritual growth is endless, burning aspiration. Before I leave you, promise, promise to do what your soul is pleading for you to do!"

With parted lips, clasped hands and burning cheeks, Margaret waited for the answer.

"O, if I could! If I only could," was the bitter, impotent cry.

"May I hope that you will try, *only hope?*"

Then calmly and tearlessly Gertrude lifted her head, the light of a great purpose rested in her eyes.

Margaret saw the light and understood.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE THE FIRE LOGS.

PHILLIP VAIL sat in his room, a plainly furnished apartment (third floor rear) of a student's boarding-house. He had come in a few moments before, restless and tired. He leaned back wearily in his arm-chair and reached to a table beside him for the evening paper. As he did so he brushed something from the table to the floor.

"A letter!" he exclaimed in surprised tones. "It must have been here when I was home at noon. Strange I did not see it! Humph! A woman's handwriting! Looks as if it were Miss Wilby's chirography.

He took his envelope opener, and in a moment had solved the problem of authorship. He read:

"My dear Mr. Vail:

I am in a terrific hurry, just going to town; but I want to invite you over to a little informal which I am giving for your cousin, Miss Stewart.

Now *don't* for the world say you have another engagement, for my heart will be pierced *through* and *through* with disappointment. O, I almost forgot to give the time—Thursday evening.

Mother said a little while ago (mothers never

forget anything—I hope I shall be even *half* as smart as mine when I am old)—that you said something about Thursday being an evening off with you. Now *do* come!

Mother joins me in kindest regards to you, and we hope to see you tomorrow evening *without fail.*

Very cordially yours,
MAEBELLE WILBY."

Then came the woman's regulation afterthought.

"P. S.—I have seen to it that Miss Stewart has company. Mr. Douglass will bring her over. I knew it would be so much out of your way to go to the Lansdowne's, and as your cousin and Mr. Douglass are very good friends, I thought it would be all right to make arrangement. Once more, don't disappoint me!!! M. W."

Phillip tossed the note over on the table. The faintest scent of violets was wafted to his nostrils. He remembered to have heard, he forgot where, that a partiality for the violet was indicative of refinement. A smile, half cynical, curled his lips. Then he heard the heavy tread of feet coming up the stairs, and in a moment a loud, cheery voice demanded entrance. The cynical smile vanished instantly. "Come in, Forsythe," he called out, at the same time replenishing the fire.

The newcomer was a tall, strapping fellow of about twenty-five. He was well-dressed, and, barring the appearance of the thick, black hair, parted in the middle and brushed till it had attained the

ultra-fashionable polish, he bore the mark of one possessing rather more than the average amount of intellect.

"That fire looks inviting, Vail. It's beastly cold. I was out making a few professional calls. I've gone the rounds and thought I'd drop in here a few moments."

"How is your practice? Growing, Forsythe?"

"O, the practice is all right. It grows amain. I'm not so confident about myself, Vail. You see that old dottard of an uncle was possessed to make a professional man of me, and I had to submit to the inevitable for the sake of self-preservation."

"Self-preservation?"

"Yes, that's the word. I want that golden pile when the old gentleman takes it into his head to capitulate. I can't do without it, that's the long and short of it. I wasn't brought up to work. My working faculties were blunted in my youth, I guess. I don't seem to have any now. Medicine is a profession one can get along in with little stock in trade. The gulling process can be very profitably applied."

Phillip Vail's face darkened ominously, but his companion was gazing into the glowing embers.

"I'll branch off later into a specialist," he continued, smoothly; "a specialist, I think, of nervous diseases. Two-thirds gob, one-third sugar pills—all that is necessary." A broad smile spread over his

face. He threw his fine head back and burst into a loud laugh.

"There are just lots of 'em giving their old family physicians the go-by, because I pamper them up a little—tell them they look prettier sick than well; that they have a peculiarly fine-strung organism, smile on the daughters when there are any, and eureka! I have them call at my office if they have a pain in their little finger. Practice? Bless you! I'll soon have to have a partner. You see, a fellow with a five hundred thousand dollar bank account waiting for him isn't to be sneezed at. Now this may sound a little egotistical, but it's the solemn fact—I could get every girl in Beechdale or Leyton worth having. They actually throw themselves at me! I can't take them all, dear things."

Phillip could keep silent no longer. "Forsythe, if I did not know you so well—didn't know you really had the making of a man in you, that you didn't mean half of what you say, I would call you to order for maligning our profession in this way. Don't you dare, Forsythe, to say that such methods as you have described are universal. There are many men—thank God for them—who are worthy of their calling, who love their work as they do their life; and there are women, God pity you if you have never met them—I have—who could not be so 'gulled' as you call it."

Forsythe saw he had gone too far. He stretched

his big frame out in the chair and smiled and yawned to hide his embarrassment.

"O, I didn't mean anything personal, Vail; don't take it so to heart. You'll be the orthodox kind, but, you see, I wasn't brought up that way. It isn't *my* fault. But, to change the subject, of course, you're invited over to Wilby's, Thursday evening?"

"Yes," said Phillip, touching the note on the table. "I had just finished reading this when you came. You are going?"

"I suppose so. Have to take in these things, now and then, you know, to keep up appearances. It's an awful bore for a fellow, but, you see, in the long run it benefits —!" Forsythe stopped abruptly and looked as one might who is brought up against some obstruction with uncomfortable suddenness. Phillip broke out into a good-natured laugh as he noted the horror depicted on his friend's face.

"Never mind, Forsythe, you're forgiven. That apology of yours settled matters between us."

The young giant breathed easily and proceeded in his observations.

"That Wilby girl's a lark! She and her mother together are matrimonial canvassers, I tell you. Plenty more like 'em, though. I met them both in the city about a week ago, and they invited me to treat them to high-balls. They asked all sorts of questions about you, Vail. I guess that is why

they bagged me. Howbeit they liked the high-balls, all right. I had to get a cab to take them home. I suppose you'll take your cousin. She's a fine girl, Vail. I met her the other day on the street. I wasn't able to go that night at the Lansdowne's."

"Well, I tell you, Forsythe, I am not anxious to go, but Miss Wilby will take a refusal as a personal insult, I am afraid. I met her for the first time at Mrs. Lansdowne's. She has telephoned to me three times and sent a special delivery or two since then —all invitations for me to come out, but I was always too busy to go. Tomorrow I have no special work and I presume I will have to resign myself to the inevitable. I'm not extra company for her style. I get disgusted and shut up like a clam. Can't help it. My vocal cords seem to ossify. But I'll not take Miss Stewart if I go." He laughed meaningly. "Here's her note. Read it; I guess she would have no objection to my showing it." Forsythe read it. "Lord!" he ejaculated, "hasn't she fixed that fine? An *informal* for Miss Stewart! Better say an informal for Mr. Vail. The whole shooting match is for you, man. Of course, she didn't want you to bring your cousin! That's clear as daylight. She doesn't want you tied to anyone but herself for the evening. I'd go just to see what she will do. It will be as good as a circus. By the way, Douglass is rather smitten with your

cousin, isn't he? Big family and big money there. About the top of the heap in Beechdale."

Phillip threw on another log of wood.

"It's cold, a good blaze makes one feel better," he said. "By the way, Forsythe, what kind of a fellow is Douglass—his character, I refer to. You see, Miss Stewart's father would never forgive me if I allowed her to fall into the hands of one of these degenerate blasé millionaires, when I might have helped it. You have been living here for years and ought to be posted."

"O, I don't know whether he would come up quite to your standard, Vail, but he's a mighty nice fellow. A hundred per cent better than the majority. Good sense, you know," and, tapping his head significantly—"brains!"

"I would like you to be more definite, Forsythe. Why do you think he would not come up to my standard?"

"Well, you see, Vail, you have given me in a few private interviews the benefit of some of your lofty notions—don't mistake me when I use that term—they are lofty, I feel it, and I know you and Douglass would hardly agree—not in action, anyway; you might in principle."

"Don't talk in this vague way, Forsythe," exclaimed Phillip, impatiently. "Has the man done anything for which he should be ashamed? That is what I want to know. You might as well tell me the truth. I'll find out from some one else if

you do not choose to reveal it. I will never use your name, be sure of that."

Forsythe still hestitated and eyed Phillip suspiciously. "Physicians and lawyers have to be close-mouthed. It's a sort of unwritten law, you know, among them. You're an advocate of principle, I believe." It was a *coup d'etat* on Forsythe's part, and the words struck home. "You are right, Forsythe," returned Phillip, quickly. "I expect some time to be a physician myself. My personal responsibility made me shoot beyond my mark."

"Your personal affection, you'd better say," was Forsythe's shrewd, mental observation. Aloud he said, in relenting way:

"I tell you, Vail, if you jolly Major Dearborne I think you'll be on the right track. He and Douglass used to be cronies in a certain way, I guess. You've met the Major's wife, haven't you? She's a hummer. She and Douglass used to be the best of friends before the Major married her. Don't seem to hitch so well now, I've noticed." A blast of wind rattled the window panes and sent a puff of smoke down the chimney.

Forsythe rose from his chair and looked out.

"Really, I must be going. Peggy will be frozen stiff. It's spitting snow, too. Well, you'll go to Wilby's, won't you? I have some business in Leyton and have to be in town about seven Thursday. Come over to The Elberon and have dinner with me. We'll go out together."

"Thank you, Forsythe. I suppose it would be better to show myself this once, under the circumstances."

"All right; good-bye! good-bye! I'll be waiting for you tomorrow evening."

Phillip closed the door and lighted his lamp. Then he took up the *Post* and tried to read. Instead, he looked into the fire and mused.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GIDDY MAZE.

BY five o'clock Thursday evening Phillip had changed his mind some dozen times as to the advisability of going to the Wilby's. Several reasons opposed an affirmative decision, several others prompted him to a contrary resolve. But one argument seemed to weigh most heavily in favor of his presence there, and this at last brought him to a conclusion; he wanted to assure himself whether he had reason to suspect anything deeper than mere friendship existing between his cousin and Douglass. If he were satisfied that there was, he would follow up the cue given him by Forsythe. She should not sacrifice herself on the altar of social corruption without knowing what the horror of it meant. Then he told himself over and over again, as he thought of the possible issue, that it would be imperative on him to keep guard over his own heart, to never let her know by look or word that she was other to him than his cousin, playfellow of many childhood days, the happy congenial companion of last winter's games and summer rambles. Like Enoch Arden, he went:

"Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As though it were the burden of a song,
'Not to tell her, never to let her know'."

A little later, when he received a telephone message from the impatient, expectant Maebelle, he made her heart glad by an answer of acceptance.

Both Mrs. Wilby and her daughter welcomed Dr. Forsythe and Phillip most effusively. Mr. Wilby, explained that worthy gentleman's wife, had come very near to weeping simply because he had been obliged to absent himself on account of a pressing engagement. This announcement Phillip was ready to take as a genuine explication of matters, but Forsythe was cruel enough to whisper in his friend's ear a vastly different interpretation of the millionaire's absence. The story that Lancaster Wilby was subject to periodic revels, which left him in such an exhausted state as to necessitate a few days at the Blue Blood Club for recuperation, was common property in Leyton.

Margaret was looking fairer than ever, Phillip thought, and she was so unfeignedly glad to see him that he almost forgot how great a gulf was perhaps even then fixed between them. They chatted away ten minutes or so, quite as unreservedly as if they had been sitting around the lamp at Clover Farm. Then Douglass strolled over.

"Glad to see you, Vail," he said, giving Phillip a hearty pat on the shoulder. "Taking an evening off?"

"Yes, you know the adage—'all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' I'm trying to look after my future, you see. I was just telling Miss Stewart concerning a plan in that direction. I have about made up my mind to invest in a horse. My uncle has been bothering me to death lately about taking more exercise. I have always been passionately fond of horses, and he remembers it. I suppose it would be the part of wisdom to heed his warning to take a ride every day. He has such abounding faith in me, too, dear old man, that he actually thinks there is not the slightest doubt of my needing the horse after awhile more than I do now."

"Well, that's all right, Vail," answered Douglass, with an unnatural earnestness in his voice, "it is the faith which people have in us—those better, perhaps, and more courageous than ourselves—that spurs us on to noble effort. We don't like to fall short of the mark they set for us. That is a sort of silent preaching that would do me more good than a clever sermon."

Miss Wilby joined the group, and the subject of discussion was dropped. She drew Phillip into a *tete-a-tete*, and as the music started a few moments after, he was obliged, out of courtesy, to ask her to dance. In a short time the whole company were whirling through the swift wild mazes of a waltz.

Phillip and his partner passed Margaret and Douglass several times, but when the first number

was finished, the two disappeared from the drawing room.

For the next, Forsythe and Phillip exchanged partners. Miss Fenten was a tall, pale-faced girl and looked, Phillip thought, as though she would have been better off at home.

"Do you know, Mr. Vail, I am a perfect fiend about dancing, and when one is so fortunate as to be with such a perfect dancer as you it is a double temptation." Miss Fenten had dropped her handkerchief, and the two had come to a sudden halt.

Phillip had never been particularly proud of achievements in the Terpsychorean accomplishment. He could not forbear a furtive smile. "Thank you, Miss Fenten, for your complimentary remark, but I hardly think I deserve it. I have always felt very postive that nature never meant me for a dancer."

"O, I can hardly remember when I did not dance," pursued Miss Fenten. "I believe it has been ever since I began to walk. I was very delicate in my childhood and had to be taken out of school. The doctor prescribed dancing for exercise, and to take up my mind—it seems very warm in here, Mr. Vail. I—" Miss Fenten's conversation suddenly came to an end. Her head fell heavily, and this time most unnaturally, on Phillip's shoulder. He supported her half-fainting form in his strong arms and placed her in a chair just at hand.

"I feel so dizzy," she gasped, closing her eyes. "A little water, please, and I will be all right. Don't tell Mrs. Wilby. She'll say I must not dance again again this evening. I'll die, if I couldn't!"

Phillip, pledged to secrecy, hastened toward the dining room beyond for a glass of water from a servant. To be less observed, he went through the conservatory instead of the hall. He had advanced but a few steps into the room when he became aware of two figures standing in the dimly-lighted and heavily scented room. Their backs were toward him, and so absorbed did they seem in each other that they did not hear his footsteps on the marble floor. The two were partially concealed by the palms against which they stood and Phillip did not at first recognize them. He merely noted the light dress of the woman and the man's tall, dark figure beside her. Then he heard Douglass' voice—low, passionate:

"I have tried—I have fought against it again and again—but tonight I must speak! Margaret, Margaret, I love you! What have you to answer?"

Phillip, with brain and heart as if paralyzed, turned and made his way again to the room, where sat the girl he had left a moment before. When he saw her, pale and leaning back against her chair, he came to himself. He remembered then what had taken him to that fateful room. Miss Fenten lifted her head wearily and looked at him. He opened

his dry lips to speak. His voice sounded queer and hollow to his own ears.

"Miss Fenten, I went the wrong way, I think. I will have the water in a moment. Pardon me for keeping you waiting."

Soon he returned with the glass of water and she drank eagerly of it.

"Miss Fenten," he said, "we will sit out the rest of this dance, and I advise you not to indulge again tonight."

"O, how do you suppose I did such a ridiculous thing?" she said, toying in an embarrassed way with her handkerchief. "I guess we were going almost too quickly for me, and the room is warm."

"Whatever the cause, Miss Fenten, if you were my sister I should insist that you never dance again," he said, earnestly, his professional concern getting the better of his discretion.

"O, Mr. Vail, how glad I am that I am not your sister," she replied, meltingly. "But really, would you rather I would not dance?"

"I am speaking from a purely medical standpoint," he said, a little coldly. "I should give the same advice to anyone whom I saw blindly disregarding the laws of health for the transient pleasure of the moment." He saw she had read into his words something far other than he had intended, and accordingly his retreat was the more pronounced.

The girl felt the change, and fighting against her

present indisposition, she arose and said, almost defiantly:

"I don't propose to take your advice. I promised this next to Mr. Freeman and I am not going to disappoint him. There he is now coming for me. Good-bye! Thanks just the same for your kind interest."

Phillip stood for a moment alone, watching the gay dancers. He longed to rush away from it all. He wished he had never come. He—but here he asked himself bitterly, whether such complaints were not unfair to Fate; had she not fulfilled his desire tonight; had she not flung to him the very boon for which he had asked? He was satisfied now as to the relations existing between Douglass and his cousin—at least partially so. When he saw their faces again he would know the whole story as well as if he had heard it. And then for the prison bars against his rebellious heart-bars never again to be lowered! "What have you to answer?" The words were burned into his soul! He had thought over and over how he would meet, like a man, without flinching, the truth that he felt now was sure to be revealed; yet now because the time of his trial was at last upon him; because things reasoned upon in the quiet of the closet are far different from the realization of them, he felt weak as a little child. He knew now how slight had been his acquaintance with his own heart.

He heard the sound of footsteps. It was Marga-

ret and Douglass. He knew her light foot-fall and the very swish of her gown over the polished floor. He felt that the bitter conflict through which he had passed must have left marks visible to a keen eye, but he could thank Heaven that she would be too happy to discern them. So he did not flee from her presence, but turned and met her—smiling, beautiful, with Douglass by her side.

"You here and alone, Phillip?" she cried. "Aren't you ashamed to hide yourself and with girls crazy to dance with you?"

"I had such an unfortunate experience a few moments ago I was afraid to venture again. I swung Miss Fenten around at such a rate she nearly fainted."

"I saw her just now with Freeman," broke in Douglass with a laugh. "Probably she was overcome again. She was leaning pretty heavily on the poor little fellow. They're rather turned about as to size. Even with his stove-pipe Freeman can't reach Miss Fenten's top feather. By the way, I heard only a little while ago that they were engaged. Not publicly announced yet, however. Don't say I told you. Forsythe told me not to tell, you know, and Freeman told him not to tell. We have to preserve some honor about these confidences."

Phillip thought that Douglass had never seemed so light-hearted before. The dancing had ceased

for a few moments, but the music now began again. Phillip turned to Margaret.

"Are you engaged for this dance? Being the honored guest I hardly dared to hope for one to-night from you. Cousins or brothers get ousted in a rush, don't they, Douglass?"

"Sometimes they do; sometimes they do not," laughed Douglass. "I don't believe you will. Miss Stewart is too kind-hearted for that?"

The words stung Phillip. "O, I hardly need to be pitied," he returned. "I am not so partial to dancing as to tax Miss Stewart's sympathies because of a momentary bereft condition."

"Why, Phillip, I don't pity you at all. The very idea! with about a dozen girls wild to dance with you. I feel quite honored. Come, let's start!"

She put out her hand to Phillip. As she did so his jealous eye intercepted a look between his cousin and Douglass that seemed, to his turbulent hart, so say: "In a little while we will be together again."

"The next is mine, Miss Stewart. I'll rest out this one," he called to Margaret as she and Phillip whirled off.

Phillip never knew how he was able to bungle through that waltz. A heavy heart makes lagging step. He felt her warm breath upon his face once but he did not trust himself to look into her eyes—those beautiful, tell-tale eyes. He could not endure to read their story. He held her to him as he

would have held her had she been dead—hopeless, all love's passion spent. The blow had deadened the very powers of emotion, and he might as well have had any other woman in his clasp. He thanked God when the music ceased. "Phillip, you are looking tired tonight," she said, concern in her voice. "I am sure you are studying too hard, or—is it, come tell me, that these affairs bore you insufferably."

"They are horrible bores," he said, relieved that she had hit upon this cause for, what must seem to her, moodiness of manner. "I came tonight merely to honor you. My mind is on other things. I am not fit for such places as these. No one would think, though"—and his tone changed to one of lighter humor,—"that you were not 'to the manner born.' You belong here rather than to the clover fields."

"Phillip," she answered, a little gravely, "remember things are not always what they seem. Beside, the clover fields may need me." Before he could answer, Douglass came, and Phillip said, graciously:

"Douglass, here is your partner, safe. I was more fortunate with her than with Miss Fenten. I guess I had better go over here and pay off some of my debts."

CHAPTER XXIX.

HOPELESS AND HEARTLESS.

GERTRUDE LAWRENCE sat alone in her sitting-room. She tapped the foot-rest nervously with one daintily-shod foot and her eyes turned frequently toward an ormolu time-piece on the mantel. The hands of the clock pointed to half-past ten, and just as one silvery peal disturbed the quiet of the room she heard her husband's latch-key in the door. The look of expectancy gradually changed into one of dread. She pressed her hands over her eyes and her lips moved tremulously.

The footsteps delayed a moment or so in the upper hall and then advanced toward her room. The door was open, but a rich Oriental drapery took its place. He paused, then pushed aside the hanging.

"Gertrude," he said, "I am here. I believe you said at dinner you wished to see me as soon as I was at leisure." He spoke with the quick, nervous accents of a man who feels that he has a distasteful duty to perform and wishes to get through with the ordeal as soon as possible. He placed a chair opposite his wife and by the side of a table upon

which stood a decanter and several glasses. He poured a glass of the sparkling beverage and drained it off.

"Well, Gertrude," he exclaimed, holding the empty glass between his fingers, "I presume I have been summoned here for a lecture. I will tell you to begin with, however, that I am in no mood to-night to listen to your complaints. We agreed long since to go our separate ways without question. If I have found it more convenient the last few nights to find shelter from wintry blasts within other walls than those of home, I hardly think, under our compact, you have any need to call me to task."

Something in her face made him pause a moment and look at her curiously. "I may be wrong, but I judged this to be the cause for the invitation to my wife's room."

She turned full upon him a pair of flashing, indignant eyes.

"You have gone widely of the mark in your supposition. I have something of far more importance to say than touching your absence from home. I have no desire to dictate in such matters. What I am going to say, Aubrey, has not originated from the impulse of a moment." The white lids dropped an instant, and when they were raised again the fires of anger had withdrawn. "It is the result of long and deep consideration. Neither do I speak

from a heart filled with anger but from one weary, O, so weary of strife."

"Gertrude, don't be dramatic, I warn you," he broke in, impatiently. "I hate such business! I am not to be cajoled by strategy. Speak out plainly, not in riddles. What is it you wished to say to me? Be brief and to the point. I am tired tonight."

"I did not for a moment expect to use strategy," she replied, calmly. "I desire only that you should understand. I did not ask you to come here out of mere whim. I will be to the point and be brief. I have taken this opportunity to plead a second and last time, Aubrey, for my freedom. Let me finish," she cried, despairingly, as he made an impatient attempt to rise from his chair—"I am a slave here—a slave in a gilded palace, but the more miserable because it is so. I have never seen the horror, the degradation of my state as I see it now. Aubrey, before God, whatever I am before the world, I am no more your wife than that other woman whom both man and God would refuse to acknowledge as such. She and I—O, Heaven, the shame of it! hold the same relation to you—I here, she yonder."

A sneering, unlovable laugh broke from her husband's lips. He poured out another draught from the decanter, then settled back easily in his chair and eyed her between his half-closed lids.

"Since when have you so changed your standard of morals, Gertrude?" he inquired. "It strikes me (excuse my allusion to embarrassing circum-

stances) that if I so desired, I might bring up a little account against you. Come, we have always been quite frank with each other, how do you feel about that little affair with ——" She raised her hand, imploringly. "Certainly, if you wish it. No necessity for mentioning names. I see you remember perfectly; but in the light of—of your new code of ethics, shall we say? suppose you try a little introspection. I should like to have the result. It would be—ah—amusing." Had he been something more than the brute he was, had he possessed for her even one scintilla of the mercy which he daily showed toward his dogs and horses, had there been in his whole make-up one spark of the divine he could not so have looked at her and driven the iron into her soul.

She lifted her face—white as the drifted snow, toward him. Her agony seemed to impress him as ludicrous. He laughed.

"You think," she asked in a panting whisper, "that you can silence me by casting my own shame in my teeth? You cannot. I am no coward tonight, however weak and abject I have been before. I am making no plea in extenuation of my own sin —a sin, however, only in this, that another had the confidence which, though you cast away, I had no right to give elsewhere."

"Confidence! ha! ha! a pretty word! Would it not be better, Gertrude, for us to keep that little agreement which we made some time ago? You

remember? To say just what we mean, you know; no juggling with words. If you insist upon calling things by new names, why not speak of my little affair as—misplaced confidence?"

She arose from her chair. He could not remember ever to have seen her in so violent a mood. It took him by surprise.

"How dare you! How dare you speak such words to me! I stand before you, Aubrey Lawrence, as pure a woman as the day you led me to the altar, when, with perjured lips, you plighted your troth. Your own black heart must needs impute corruption to every other. I dreamed once that I loved you. I did not know then that it was a blind fascination which when the idol was broken would vanish. I fell—but in that fall I caught a glimpse of the vision of love, and I said—love is a union of souls. I thought I realized that love in another, but I needed to fall once more. This fall, I think, has been to the bottomless pit, for I have seen the vision of my own unrighteousness and have cried in my agony—God show me what love is! The vision came again, and I saw that love is truth. Corruption nor deception, nor anything that will defile is love."

Her passion spent, she sank exhausted in her chair. The look of cool scorn that had rested on Aubrey Lawrence's features disappeared. A frown, dark, angry, gathered on his brow. He reached for the decanter, but his wife's cold, white hand

pressed heavily upon his arm. "For God's sake, do not take another drop! You need your brain to think. We must settle a question of life or death tonight." He shook off her hand as if it had been a viper. "Woman! Am I to be your slave? Am I to cringe and simper when you say the word? Why have you the stuff here? To look at? Some more of your affected piety, eh? Your lips are not so untainted that you have the right to warn."

"Who taught me to drink it?" she retorted, stung to desperation, "but I am not screening myself. I plead tonight that you will not benumb your power to reason; that you may grant me justice. Aubrey, I am not pleading for myself alone, but for my child also. Think, O think, while you can of what it means to rear this little, tender flower without a ray of the light of purity. What will she be, what must she be, breathing into her soul the germs of sin? Let me take her—she is mine—away, far away from here, try to teach her what is good and true. Do not, do not look at me that way, Aubrey, with that smile upon your face! I know what you would say—what do I know of goodness and truth? But I do know it now. Through suffering I have learned and I can live it in my little child. Give her to me, Aubrey. Give me one more chance to be a noble woman. I will go away any place you say. I will never see *his* face again, nor by one written word communicate with him. From this night he will be as one who

has never existed. I swear it! That is my sacrifice. Only give me my child, the one pure heart that yet may save me! Aubrey, speak to me!"

He pushed back the decanter from him and fixed his cold, grey eyes upon her. "I will obey you," he said, touching with his diamond ring the cut glass until it rang. "I wish you to feel that I am fully capable of acting tonight. I will be brief, for I have, as you know, no special delight in scenes.

"You remember, perhaps, that when I married I took my wife from a relatively obscure position. I think you felt it; at least you so expressed yourself."

She nodded in acquiescence.

"Very good! You knew, too, that my family was proud and conservative; that the name of Lawrence had for generations been associated with the most aristocratic families, both in this country and across the sea. Whatever may have been their slight, secret offences, no notorious blot has ever marred their escutcheon. I am the eldest son of my branch. I do not propose, because of a mere woman's whim to bring upon my family the sneers, the gibes of society. Do as you please in all things, but the breaking publicly of the bonds which, though galling to both of us, must, nevertheless, bind. If the house becomes at times unendurable you may on the slightest excuse have a respite. The child, while she is a child, may go with you, accompanied by her nurse—but the dignity of the

family must be upheld under all circumstances. Whatever be the cause of this present attitude of yours, I beg of you for your own peace of mind, as well as of mine, to change it. Remember, please, I do not wish to be summoned on another such fool's errand as the one tonight. You know my decision. It is final. If you should, however, persist in your absurd ideas, in spite of my wishes, your own name shall pay the penalty. I have wealth and influence on my side. You have nothing. The breath of scandal can shrivel the purest, what will it do with you? Any fanatical course will mean banishment from your home and child and lasting calumny. I am not the man to merely threaten. I wish you to understand, Gertrude, that my honor and that of my family cannot be treated lightly with impunity." He rose from the chair and pointed to the clock. "It is late; have you any more to say?"

"Nothing," she answered mechanically.

He scanned her colorless face narrowly. He felt that his words had clinched the matter; that the desired result was obtained. He could afford, therefore, to be gracious. "Gertrude," he said, a little less sternly, "I advise you to retire immediately. You are in no condition to undergo excitement such as you have brought upon yourself this evening. Good-night!"

When he had left she turned toward the decanter that had been used so freely by her husband. She

poured out a wineglass full to the brim and drank it. Then she went over to her desk, took a piece of note paper and wrote clearly and firmly:

"Dear Margaret:

Tonight I asked for my freedom and was refused. The fetters that bind my soul are to bind it until the end. I should have foreseen how futile it would all have been. Yet do not pity me. I am only reaping the awful results of my own blind actions. My husband can see in me only one not otherwise than himself; perhaps in one sense this is true—quite true.

"You will say, I know, that I am now absolved from any further duty toward him; that my duty now is toward myself alone. The consequences, however, of acting upon such a decision, have been pointed out to me. I stand appalled. God help me! I have not the courage to be true to myself. My darling child alone could save me, and my independent act would be the barrier that would separate us. Too late I see in this hour of need what a character, free from even the breath of suspicion, would be to me. Tonight the die has been cast and my destiny settled.

"I know this will wound your pure, sweet soul, but do not shed one tear for me. I feel that soon I will be beyond this earthly strife. I know not what awaits me yonder.

"With thankfulness for the one bright glimpse of truth, though the glimpse has made my own dark-

ness more impenetrable, I will say, good-night.

"GERTRUDE."

She folded the note, placed it in an envelope and directed it; then rising, pressed an electric bell. As she did so she put her hand suddenly against her breast.

"Lena," she said to the maid when she appeared in the doorway, "I wish you would have James post this letter tonight. It is important. Do not let him forget it. He has not retired yet, I hope."

"No, ma'am," replied the girl.

"I wish you would come to me then, Lena. I am not feeling well this evening. I must have a little aid."

The girl was not long in discharging her errand and was soon once more with her mistress.

"I would like to kiss my baby. She always looks so sweet in her little bed," she said when Lena had robed her for the night.

"O, let me help you, ma'am! You seem so very weak. I hope you're not going to have one of your bad spells," exclaimed the girl, as Gertrude almost tottered through the nursery door.

Annette opened her eyes slightly and looked half-startled toward the figure bending over little Dorothy.

"*Mon dieu*, you do frighten me! she exclaimed. "It seemed a spirit—*vraiment!*"

Her mistress smiled sadly. "I only wanted to

kiss my baby, Annette. I have seen her only once today." Then she turned and left.

"My heart is troubling me tonight," she said, as Lena tucked her carefully in bed. "Place that bottle on the table here, Lena. I may—perhaps—need it if I do not get to sleep. You need not bother to come in again. I will ring the bell should I need you."

Lena slept with one eye open through the night, but no call came from Mrs. Lawrence's room. "She must be resting well," she told herself, and at last, toward morning, fell into a sound sleep.

When she awoke the bright morning sunshine was streaming into the room, and it was nearly eight. She dressed hurriedly and went into her mistress' room. She lay just as the girl had left her, except that one fair hand was outstretched upon the coverlet. It looked strangely white and lifeless. Instinctively Lena touched it with her own. It was cold and the girl fled terrified from the chamber.

Mr. Lawrence and physicians were summoned, but Gertrude Lawrence was beyond medical aid. They stood a few moments looking upon the features, calm now, but with a calm that was frozen there.

"She has been dead, Mr. Lawrence, for six or seven hours," said Dr. Winthrop. Then he lifted up the little bottle and whispered a few words in Aubrey Lawrence's ear.

A flush mounted to the dark brow. "My family"—he began, excitedly. The physician glanced at the silent figure on the bed.

"I was her *friend*," he said, meaningly.

CHAPTER XXX.

A DAZZLING PROPOSAL.

EECHDALE had never in its history been called upon to mourn at the same time the loss in two such distinguished families as that of the Lawrence's and Lansdowne's. Possessing such an unprecedented opportunity she meant to show that she was equal to the occasion.

The *Beechdale Magnet and Leyton Herald*, each, had long articles occupying the front page, in which were set forth the many virtues of the illustrious dead. At the same time the untoward fate that had snatched both in the very zenith of their social glory, to the dread unknown, was deeply deplored. The articles pleased the friends and acquaintances of the deceased and the sale of the papers suited the editors.

Thre is in human nature an element of hero-worship which almost universally impels us to snatch hungrily at gossip concerning earth's great ones, though we ourselves have never so much as touched the hem of their garments.

If flowers are symbols of affection, Gertrude Lawrence had been deeply loved; yet Margaret questioned if any real mourners beside herself were there that day, except the grey-haired, sorrowing

parents and a tall, sad-faced stranger, who laid upon the bier a magnificent bunch of crimson roses. The world's conclusion, ohwever, would be radically different. It looked at Aubrey Lawrence's deep mourning band and black cuff-buttons; little Dorothy's black velvet cloak and nodding raven plumes and made its own deductions therefrom.

A few days later occurred the funeral of the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne. The pomp and ceremony of the second funeral solemnities were in no wise inferior to those of the first, but after this latter event Beechdale felt that she had fulfilled her duty and should be allowed to settle down to her normal state.

Margaret, too, attempted to take up once more life's interrupted thread. She tried to quiet her perturbed mind that she might decide a question that nearly two weeks before had been asked of her and which, though claiming immediate consideration, had been again and again pushed aside.

Douglass had made an engagement to accompany her to Miss Wilby's to express formally their appreciation of their young friend's hospitality. The evening was at hand, and she knew that in a few hours she would be once more alone with him. Her heart beat more quickly at the thought.

The afternoon was a dreary one outside, and Margaret turned her eyes from the tall, leafless trees to the bright flames of the gas logs in the library grate. Mrs. Lansdowne, Yzabel and Kath-

eryn had gone to their relatives and Elinoir, for perhaps the first time in her life, had been inveigled into hearing Maud recite her French lesson.

The girl's slow, spasmodic utterances came to her from the room beyond. She heard Elinoir's impatient correction, followed by Maud's pathetic appeal:

"O, Elinoir, what does it mean? Can't you tell me that? Mademoiselle said we must know it in English. You ought to know, Elinoir, when you're in one of Monsieur Bereil's French classes."

The controversy went ont, and Margaret closed the door softly that she might "hear" herself think.

Dozens of times since that evening, two weeks ago, she had gone over in her mind every detail of that scene in the conservatory. Each time there came with the recalling of it a strange feeling of pain, mingled with an only vaguely-defined joy. She attempted to trace out the spring of this discomfort. She told herself that perhaps her heart had been severely startled that night by the suppressed, though terribly evident power of his love. She could hear again as plainly as she heard them that night his words—"Margaret, I have tried. I have fought against it again and again, but tonight I cast all warning aside! Margaret, Margaret, I love you! What have you to answer?"

She remembered he had not even touched her. She admired him for that act of gallantry, and respect. Standing there, how tall and handsome he

had looked! And she? How had she felt? Delirious with joy? Triumphant that she had won a love, unsought? She could not say. She was an enigma to herself.

Perhaps if she had been a woman not so enthralled by ideals, but one willing to accept situations as they seemed and content not to delve beneath the surface, she might have answered him that night. Instead she had replied:

"You have asked me a great question tonight. The answer is the making or marring of life's destiny. I must think."

So long as she had been meeting him day after day, listening to his brilliant conversation, she had felt a certain exhileration in his companionship. Perhaps, she considered, if he had not declared his love for her so suddenly, passionately, it would have been different. The deepest recesses of her soul had been touched. She stood appalled before the unsuspected revelation. Reason had reared its majestic head and Love—if it were there—had sunk affrighted. But she was too wise a woman to bid Reason depart. She felt that the path she chose must be one where Love and Reason led the way.

A union with Douglass would take her from the social sphere to which she had been born, a sphere in which true American manhood and womanhood was the embodiment of domestic virtues and loftiest aspirations, to place her in a world of falsehoods, of vanity, of licensed sensuality. Would she

dare to enter it? She thought of Gertrude Lawrence and shuddered. Yet she was not not influenced by ascetic preferences. She did not feel the necessity of retiring from the world in order to achieve the deepest cravings of her heart. She would willingly walk where Destiny placed her, but when she chose one to walk with her, to whom she must swear lasting allegiance, such a one must be her companion in the truest, largest sense. The two would be one flesh, not galley-slaves chained together. What if—she groaned aloud at the horror of the bare possibility of such a thing—what if, after marriage, after she had given herself irrevocably into his keeping, she should find that her husband was not worthy of her love—of any woman's love? She started as one would finding one's self on the very edge of a precipice.

"I will tell him tonight that he must wait a little longer. I cannot answer yet." So once again she pushed the issue from her.

The storm that had threatened in the afternoon passed over, and when, after making their call, Douglass and Margaret started home, the moon was riding high and brilliant in the heavens.

Beechdale was beautiful in the sunlight. She was a veritable home for the gods bathed in the white radiance of the moon. Douglass and Margaret felt the influence of the scene as they walked slowly down the broad avenue.

They talked of trivial things at first; it so often

happens thus when there is the consciousness that weightier matters stand like giant forms waiting to be heard. After a little topics seemed to fail. A silence came between them, and through its transparent medium the thoughts of each were revealed.

"How brilliant the moonlight is tonight," she said at last, lifting her face toward the great silver orb.

"Surpassingly so," he returned. Then his eyes sought the sweet, upturned face. To him fairer than the goddess of the night was the queen of his heart and life. A sudden impulse moved her and she turned to meet his ardent gaze. "Mr. Douglass, you remember that nearly two weeks ago you asked me a question? I told you I was utterly unable then to answer it." There was a little tremble in her voice at the last.

"I do remember," he replied, earnestly.

"You said then you would wait until I was quite ready. You have never by word or act given me to understand that you were impatient at my delay. I want to thank you for it." He made a little deprecatory gesture.

"Do you understand, Mr. Douglass, that the question you asked of me cannot be lightly or quickly answered; that it involves the endless woe or happiness of two human lives; that a mistake once committed can *never* be obliterated. O, do not—do not think I am trifling with you—that I

am taking pleasure in holding back that for which you have asked."

"I have not thought so for a moment," he broke in, eagerly. "I would not, had you kept me waiting twice as long."

"Then," she said with a little falter in her voice, "I hope you will attribute to my request tonight none but noble motives. I am still unable to give you your answer. Will you—wait—a little longer?"

He nodded assent, but she saw an expression of keen disappointment pass over his face, and it hurt her. She wrung her hands together in the fervor of her earnestness. "O," she cried, "*do* you understand what it means to me? Do you?"

"I think I am beginning," he answered. "I feel as though I ought to stand with uncovered head when in your presence, yet I have the presumption —the rashness—the audacity—anything you may phrase it—to ask you to be my wife!"

"Hush! you must not abuse yourself so. If a man has a right to ask a woman to be his wife, then in that act he has shown her the highest honor which she can ever receive. Whatever her answer may be, if she is a true woman, she will feel that." They had reached her aunt's house and she paused and looked into his face. "Will you forgive me for making you wait a little longer," she pleaded.

"Forgive you!" he cried, passionately. "I would forgive you anything—even if you sent me to per-

dition. But give me hope, only a crumb. It is all I ask. It is not much for a starving man."

"I could not send you to perdition," she said firmly.

"No woman, good or bad, could do that. One sends one's self there."

"You are right—you always are," he replied. A starving man is not a very reasonable creature, you know. But will you give me a little hope to live on between now and then? Even if you should never give anything but that one crumb—if you should let me starve afterward, I will have the remembrance of those days of comfort."

Pity is akin to love. Douglass was a good diplomat whether consciously or unconsciously. Margaret felt a sudden longing to put her hands in the strong, tender ones of her lover and say:

"I will strive no longer! This—this is your answer." But instead she replied, simply, "Yes, you may hope."

In silence they ascended the steps. Some feeling of awe made him refuse her invitation to enter. Their hands met and a low "good-night" was spoken.

The sound of the closing door struck against Douglass' heart like the drawing of prison bars, shutting out for ever a human soul from life and liberty. He passed quickly down the walk and out upon the street. Once he lifted his head upward toward the moonlight, but his face was not that of

a starving man to whom some crumbs had just been cast; rather, that of a Tantulus, who, in sight of plenty, was being tortured by terrible need.

CHAPTER XXXI.

COUNSEL.

THE next afternoon, Phillip recceived a note from Margaret, and with an apprehension of coming evil he tore open the envelope to read the brief lines.

"Dear Phillip:

"Will it be convenient for you to come over some evening this week, say Friday? Aunt Frances has tickets for the Brandt Concerts. Being in mourning none of the family can use them. If you would care to go I should enjoy it, I know. I want to have a dear, old-fashioned talk with you, and I have something *very, very* important to say.

With love,

"MARGARET."

It seemed as if all the vital currents in his body stopped; as if the very universe itself for an instant stood still. He grasped the table by which he was standing for support. "What a good surgeon I would make," he thought bitterly. "I knew this would come and I dreamed that I could meet it like a man."

He did not question the nature of the revelation to which Margaret had alluded in her letter. That

it was concerning Douglass and herself he felt as positive as if she had already confided in him. With this absolute assurance, as soon as he was able to think and plan, he decided upon a line of action that he felt incumbent upon him to carry out at once.

Ever since Forsythe's remark when Phillip had asked him concerning Douglass' character he had felt an anxiety to learn what if anything of importance had been meant by the young physician's half-laughing advice to consult the Major.

There should be no further hesitancy about the matter, he determined. His Uncle Wayland had asked him to keep a watch-care over his cousin. Would he be true to that charge if he should, without a word of warning allow her, pure and tender as the flower of her own fragrant meadows, to be plucked by a hand black with sin? Margaret was lost to him—the thought almost drove him mad and in the first, desperate moments he blamed himself for being a laggard in love. Why had he not, during those long, sweet days in the past given her a glimpse of his throbbing heart—Love begets love; perhaps—! Dear God! what was he saying? What right had he, poor, with no prospects in life except those existing in unsubstantial day-dreams, to bind another life to his? Thank heaven! he was still sane. He could answer from his torn heart—no right, no moral right whatever. What had she known of the great, wide world existing beyond her simple country home—a world needing perhaps just such sweet

uncompromising women as she to purge it? He was glad she had seen this other world. She had strength of character and the wisdom to choose for the best. Her choice would never be one made without deep reflection. He knew her well enough to feel sure of that. With such thoughts he went out of his room, into the street and toward the Blue Blood Club.

Major Dearborne was a prominent member of the Blue Blood Club. He had invited Phillip several times to drop in to see him, but Phillip had had very little time and even less inclination, up to the the present, to take advantage of the numerous courtesies extended him.

Phillip found the Major genial and happy among a few friends. He grasped the new comer's hand and gave it a hearty squeeze. The Major was in one of his reminiscent moods, and he hailed Phillip as a new and for that reason, perhaps, more interested listener. "Glad to see you, my boy, extremely glad. My wife was saying the other day she felt rather piqued because you did not show a desire to accept any of her numerous invitations.

"I appreciate the kindness, Major Dearborne, but I have so little time for social engagements, however much I might enjoy them. I visit very few with the exception of my cousin, Miss Stewart."

"A very handsome girl, that Miss Stewart! Magnificent form, remarkable eyes! Let's see, is the re-

lationship on the Lansdowne side? Is she a relative of William Lansdowne's?"

"No, a niece of Mrs. Frances Lansdowne, her mother and Mrs. Lansdowne were sisters."

"Ah, I see! Very fine family by the way—the Lansdowne's brought over their coat of arms with them this time, I hear. (Grisly, two Martinis and a bottle of claret.) Yes, indeed, very fine family, very fine. Still, I always say I'm prouder to be an American—better than all the titles in Christendom. That's so! 'Major' sounds well enough for me. That's so!" The Major gave his knee a resounding blow. "I say, Vail, did you ever—(makes a fellow smack his lips doesn't it? Only place in Leyton to get a cocktail!) I say did you ever know I entered the army as a second lieutenant and was a Major in two weeks. The battle of Shiloh did it. I tell you, that was a sight worth seeing, Vail. (Not another glass? Ha! ha! ha! Taste not cultivated? Another cocktail, Grisly.) As I was saying, it was at the battle of Shiloh. Inside of three minutes a dozen officers were taking their last sleep. I was Major before I knew it; Lord, before I knew it, actually. I look upon myself as a self-made man, ha! ha! ha! with apologies to Shiloh; apologies to Shiloh, ha! ha! ha! I come of a fighting family, sir." The Major's cheeks became inflated at the thought. "You see my grandfather—no, no, my greatgrandfather came over with Lord—Lord—Gad! I know his name as well as my own! Lord—Lord—"

but the Major's cocktails were making the Major somewhat hazy in respect to the movements of his ancestors. Phillip noted the fact. He was fearful that the purpose for which he had come would be marked with failure. He concluded to force an issue.

"Beechdale boasts quite a number of old families does she not?" he asked.

"Quite sir, quite."

"I have met a Mr. Douglass. The Douglasses stand very high, do they not?"

"Yes, an old Scotch family of King James time. Malcolm's father was a fine man. I remember him well. Loved sports. Why he had the finest lot of dogs and horses anywhere around. Loved hunting—died in the saddle, in fact. Found dead in his own woods, dead as a door nail and his horse by his side. He was a fine man—had scores of friends."

"His son seems to be the more quiet sort I thought," remarked Phillip, trying to lead up to his subject. "I have met him several times with my cousin."

"Ah, that reminds me," replied the Major with a sly wink; "my wife said to me the other day that he seemed to be paying very particular attention to Miss Stewart. He's rather a cynic, you know. Girls don't just understand him. Would give their heads though to trap him! He's a good catch for any girl."

"Well, you see Major Dearborne," begun Phillip

looking intently at the tips of the Major's patent leathers, "you see Miss Stewart is rather different from most girls. Blue-blood, old family, wealth, do not count much with her when she makes her estimates. It is the man himself—what he is, not what he possesses. Is Douglass' character above reproach? Is there any stain on that?"

The Major smiled benignly and filled another glass before answering.

"I wish you would change your mind and join me in another glass, Vail. This is excellent stuff. Can't beat it anywhere. No more? Very well. You are alluding to Malcolm's past? Well, aside from a little a—a—'romance' shall we call it? We all have them—he can present a pretty clean title—clean as most of us."

"Very likely." The Major failed utterly in detecting the irony of the remark. "The 'romance' I suppose that of many aristocrats?"

The Major gave a little interpretive shrug of his shoulders. "Nothing beyond pardon, my dear fellow, nothing beyond pardon, I assure you. A slight entanglement—very trifling matter, very. You'll be there yourself, ha! ha! ha!"

Fire leaped to Phillip's eyes, but he knew an exhibition of anger would ruin all. The Major unconscious of the proximity of a volcano proceeded.

"The woman is very respectable—a distant relative I am told of the Van Raensallers. In fact"—he leaned toward Phillip in a most confidential man-

ner," I advised him myself to marry her. She's an educated woman—Douglass wouldn't have any other though—and all she needs is lifting up a little." The Major moved nearer and lowered his voice "I did it myself! Yes, sir, I did it myself!" The Major set his mouth and extended his lower jaw. He had the air of a man who had just delivered himself of a personal enconium. Phillip looked mystified.

"Mrs. Major, I mean. You'd never have known it, would you? She is a wonderful woman, wonderful, I said when I first saw Mrs. Major, 'She will bear lifting up'—and I did it. Douglass may have a little trouble throwing the woman off. It may cost him a neat little sum. She's pretty high strung. She'll be cut up no doubt, but he'll be able to settle all right after the first shock has subsided. Don't give yourself any uneasiness about that."

It was very evident to Phillip that this blue-blood scion of a blue-blood race had not the faintest idea that anything beyond Douglass' ability to "settle" would hinder a union between the latter and Margaret should Douglass have any desires in that direction. ..

The contempt for the shrivelled-souled, morally corrupt specimen of humanity before him was visible on Phillip's face. It distorted every feature. Had they been alone—out of hearing of the loungers about the halls, he would have given the Major to understand more forcibly than politely, perhaps, that there were men, his word to the contrary, who

had lived and would live quite free of entanglements; that there were women notwithstanding the Major's ignorance of the fact, who would sooner die—starving—in the street, than knowingly mate themselves to shameless licentiates. His whole soul clamored for utterance, to give vent to the awful upheaval within himself.

He arose and stood resting one hand against a magnificent onyx pedestal. The Major, looking at him was struck with the handsome appearance of his guest. He had noted it before, he was doubly impressed with the fact now.

"He will bear watching. Mrs. Major is young and facinating. I thought it would be a good thing to have a little confidental talk. Well enough to get acquainted with your friends and your foes," thought the Major.

He inwardly congratulated himself upon his keen foresight. The smile of congratulation broadened his mouth and he started when Phillip's voice fell on his dulled ear.

"It is late, Major Dearborne. I must be off. Before I go, however, I would like to say in honor to Miss Stewart that I think you do not know her in the least, if you imagine that there could be any adjustment of affairs that would allow her to enter into a contract that was not founded on honor and chastity."

The Major, with a stupefied expression of wonder on his face gazed at Phillip, tall and straight be-

side him. He knew from the tremble in Phillip's voice that something was wrong and that what he had said was the cause. He pulled himself together with a supreme effort.

"My dear fellow," he exclaimed, "I really meant nothing against Miss Stewart. The thing is done every day, true as Heaven, every day. Plenty of cases. I could name them, right in Beechdale." The Major's voice was getting alarmingly near a roar.

"I am not taking you to task for your sentiments," returned Phillip. "I felt it my duty to assure you though, that your classification in regard to women was a little in error—that is all."

The Major was slightly mollified. "Won't you let me show you through the club-house, Vail? We're quite proud of the place. Some magnificent pieces of art back yonder. I'd like to introduce you to a few of my friends. Why, if there aren't Forsythe and Chatterton!"

"I really can't, Major Dearborne, it is very kind, but I must be off. I have already staid longer than I anticipated. I'll have to beg you to excuse me this time."

"Well, then, if I can't persuade you. But come again, Vail—any day," returned the Major. "And Vail"—the Major lowered his voice—"don't for the world speak of this little bit of gossip in connection with my name. I am a very good friend of Douglass."

"Wouldn't think of it. Good-bye." The Major looked relieved, and the two parted.

Then the man with the pedigree sat down once more in his chair.

"Dog it all!" he ejaculated. "I've made a darned fool of myself, that's what I have. Mrs. Major's has told me a hundred times I talk too much when I take cocktails and claret—and I have. He's a queer duck though; one of your drivelling, pious chaps—the most dangerous kind. He'll bear being watched. Mrs. Major is a fascinating woman!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

UNRAVELLED.

THE next morning Margaret received from Phillip a note of acceptance to her invitation; Friday evening she sat waiting for him in the library, in company with her aunt and cousins and Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne. She looked the very spirit of winter in her shimmering grey gown with its furry garniture and toque to match; at least so Phillip thought as he stepped in among the little company.

"Clarissa, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Vail, Margaret's cousin; Mr. Vail, my sister-in-law, Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne." There was reflected in Mrs. Frances Lansdowne's voice the commendable pride she felt in announcing the connection.

Phillip bowed to a middle-aged woman seated in a large, easy chair beside Katheryn. This then, was the woman who helped sway the scepter over Beechdale's Four Hundred. He looked at her curiously. There was nothing remarkable, at least in respect to her personal appearance, that would indicate her exalted station. She was of medium height with deep-set grey eyes and heavy under-

jaw. Naturally pale, perhaps, she appeared excessively so in her deep mourning robes.

"I am so glad you could take Margaret to the concert," remarked her aunt; then in a little lower voice—"Being in mourning, of course none of us could appear at a public affair." There was a slight droop at the corners of her mouth.

"So I understood." Then he turned to Margaret—"Have we time to spare or should we be going?"

"We need be in no haste, Phillip. We have time to visit a little."

"Yes, do stay," pleaded Katheryn. "We have not seen you for such an age. We were beginning to think you were offended at something we had done."

"It takes a great deal to offend me and I am sure I have received only kindness from all of you," he answered.

"You are studying law, are you not?" asked Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne from the depths of her crushed crepe collar.

"Medicine, Aunt Clarissa," corrected Yzabel. "Mr. Vail will soon be a full-fledged M. D. I do hope you will decide to practise here. I simply adore to count professional men among my acquaintances. I always said I would marry a professional man, didn't I, mamma, long before I had any idea of marrying Fletcher, you know."

"Yes, it was queer. You remember, Clarissa, how the dear child used to insist upon it?"

Mrs. Frederick William Lansdowne nodded assentingly, then turned to Phillip:

"You have met Mr. Chatterton, Judge Chatterton's eldest son? A rising young lawyer of Leyton."

"I had the opportunity soon after my arrival," answered Phillip, a picture of the evening with the judge's promising son coming up vividly before him.

"The Chattertons are quite an old family of Beechdale," continued Mrs. Lansdowne by way of a last convincing argument as to Mr. Chatterton's superiority, and fearful perhaps, that Phillip might not have been apprised of the fact.

Phillip felt it incumbent upon him to acknowledge in some way this last bit of information; but, as he was unable to evince even a creditable amount of enthusiasm at the intelligence heard some dozen times before, he only replied rather laconically: "So I have heard." Then Margaret suggested that it was time to go.

It was a brilliant company that had assembled at Lennox Opera House. The Brandt Concerts were considered among the chief society affairs of the winter.

Phillip was a lover of music as well as Margaret, and though each heart was conscious of something of far greater moment than the mere enjoyment of

a musical programme, nevertheless the exquisite orchestral numbers absorbed at times their undivided attention.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony occupied the principal part on the programme. Neither Phillip nor Margaret had a score to follow; even if they had been so provided, they could not have followed it, perhaps, any more intelligently, than some around them who were supplied with these tokens of superior artistic appreciation. Every strain, however, as it floated across the hall was drunk in eagerly by the two entranced listeners. As the last notes of the delirious whirl of the Sherzo dropped from the magic strings, Margaret is a perfect ecstasy of passionate delight said to Phillip in the short intermission that followed: "It seems as though I could breathe every fragrance of the meadows, Phillip; hear the laughter of our streams, could feel the mad impulse of the new-born spring as she will soon lap over our hills and valleys." Then she checked her ardent words and looked, blushing, in Phillip's face.

"You think I am trying to be poetical?" she asked. He shook his head.

"The music seemed to be speaking somehow to *me*. It was only a fancy."

"It was not fancy," he said gravely. "Your soul leaps to the music of many sounds that others can never hear."

"Phillip, what a flatterer you are. Should not

each of us be in harmony with our surroundings. These are the sounds of my country home. Some can hear and see what I cannot."

"They may be the poorer for it," he answered; "and I cannot allow even my cousin to call me a flatterer."

Later during the intermission Phillip asked, "Shall we take a promenade in the foyer with the rest?" But Margaret preferred a *tete-a-tete* with him, sitting in their chairs. Several of the Beechdalians, however, came over on their way to the foyer to pass the compliments of the evening.

Major Dearborne and his wife were there and nodded smilingly to Margaret and Phillip when they spied them from their box. The Major's wife was surrounded by a little coterie of admirers. As the Major stood protectingly near to his wife, Mrs. Major was reduced to the necessity of casting from behind her fairy shield—an imported fan,—dangerous darts from her chameleon eyes. Mrs. Folger and 'Jack' walked slowly up the aisle from their seats in the premium row. Mr. Nelson Boskin came after as the proud escort of Miss Phoebe Chatterton and later Fletcher, trailing along rather disconsolately with his mother. Indeed, everybody who was anybody—though the act would bring them to the verge of poverty for the next six months, went to the Brandt Concerts during the winter season.

Toward the end of the intermission Margaret

saw Mrs. Pierson and some friends enter a box next to that of Major Dearborne. She felt a sudden thrill rise in her breast as they did so. Douglass was not with them, but the mere presence of his sister brought once more to the foreground the grave subject that had for the time receded to the dim boundary line of consciousness.

Phillip, too, noticed the new comers, but he had determined not in any way to precipitate the one topic which up to the present moment had been tacitly avoided by both. Phillip, however, had no need for anxiety. Margaret felt a hesitancy in revealing her secret even to Phillip in the brilliancy of a thousand lectric lights. "When we are going home," she determined to herself. "We will enjoy the hour that we have as it is." And, indeed, so thoroughly did both become identified with the music and the gay beauty of the scene that they hardly realized it was at an end until they stepped from the car and began to walk down the familiar avenue. Both felt, then, instinctively that they had passed into another scene of life's appointed acts.

A silence fell between them; a silence which declared the proximity of another link in the chain of destiny. Margaret broke it. "Shall we walk a little way down the avenue? I have something to say to you Phillip, tonight; perhaps it can be better said here and now than at another place or time." He smiled into her face. The wild throbbing in his breast made it dangerous for him to speak.

She interpreted the smile as he had meant she should. She guessed that he suspected what her secret was, and met it with an answering look of confidence. Her hand slipped softly down his arm and rested quietly within his own broad palm.

"Two weeks ago," she began,—"that night at Miss Wilby's—Mr. Douglass told me something which surprised me very much, Phillip. If I were saying this to one—to one I mean who did not know me—he might say, perhaps, it is impossible for a woman ever to misinterpret a man's attentions to herself—but I am sure you will not so judge my words." She paused a second but she read that upon his face which must have satisfied, for she went on. "It never occurred to me that Mr. Douglass thought of me other than as a diversion—for a society man you know, has seldom the unique experience of conversing with a real, live country girl." The little witticism served its purpose—they both laughed. A common feeling brought them somehow nearer to each other.

"You know," she continued, but a little more rapidly now as if anxious to get it all told, "Mr. Douglass and I have been together quite a little Phillip. I have enjoyed his company. He was never silly or sentimental in his conversation. With him one needed to be a little more than an adept at social repartee."

She paused again. Somehow what she had intended to tell in a few words seemed to be length-

ening out indefinitely. Phillip, too, was so quiet—the very air seemed to have a strange hush about it. Her first nervousness was coming once more upon her. She *must* get it over.

"He—he—said he loved me, Phillip," she flung out with an abruptness borne of extremity. "He is waiting for my answer."

He knew she expected him to speak.

"And you love him?" he asked. "It is a long time to keep a man waiting—two weeks."

"O, Phillip, it is that which worries me. If I would do as so many do—let reason have no part in the decision—I might, perhaps, have answered long ago. But the awful responsibility of taking a step which can never, never, be retraced, seems somehow to keep a barrier against my heart. Think how great a chasm there is between our social spheres. Do you believe it can be successfully bridged?"

"Only in one way—by perfect love," he answered solemnly. "By a love that rests either side the chasm on truth and purity."

She was looking with wide, earnest eyes into his face. How could he wound her! Yet to wound was to save and he could not flinch. Still he hesitated.

"You know, Phillip, there is that which I believe can never be spanned—a wrong life. Before all things I would know whether the man to whom I give my heart is free from moral stain. It is this

which has made me speak to you tonight. I felt that you could perhaps assure me of this. You have opportunities for ascertaining that I have not. The few I have I am sorry to say I could not rely upon. Under other circumstances, Phillip, my father must have been the first custodian of my secret. Can you help me?"

He could hesitate no longer. "Pearl," he called her by the old, sweet name, "you have asked something which is hard for me to answer; believe me, very hard: First, because I fear it will hurt you far more than you yourself are aware of; also because I dislike to speak ill of any man." He felt her hand tremble in his. He dared not look into her face.

"I have heard from two sources," he continued, "and the last I feel to be perfectly reliable, that Mr. Douglass, while a man of superior endowments intellectually and a person of exceptionally gracious and winning manners is corrupt at heart. He is what you have, perhaps, feared he might be—a man utterly careless of his moral life. I believe he has many noble instincts which had they been allowed to develop, had they been reinforced by his own intellectual powers, would have made him the man he was meant to be. I have no doubt that, since meeting you, he has felt the longing for a higher life, has been anxious, indeed, to cast off the old fetters. But Malcolm Douglass has wronged one woman—no matter what she is—as a man he has wronged her, now he seeks, through the medium of

a pure relation, to wrong another. God forbid that you should be that one!"

He had risen above any personal pain. He was battling now for the life of one whom he would die to save. He spoke with an energy that shook his own soul as by a power without itself. He could dare now to look at her. The light of the moon was full in her face. The muscles of her mouth and chin set like flint and the pallor as of death was on her face. Her steps suddenly flagged as if smitten with unutterable weariness. A little gust of wind passed by. She shivered.

"Shall we turn back now?" he asked, trying to make his tones sound natural and failing miserably. "It seems a little cold. The wind has risen, I think."

He was trying to make it easy for her—to make her feel that he really did not know how poignantly she was suffering.

"It is cold," she answered. "Yes, the wind has risen. See, it is moving even the branches of that oak."

They had been walking slowly and were now but a little beyond her aunt's house. There was still a bright light in the library. She dreaded being obliged to go in and talk, yet even in her pain she did not forget the comforts of others.

"You will come in, Phillip, and get warm, will you not?"

"Not tonight, Pearl. I thank you ever so much

for the enjoyment of the music—and your company this evening," he answered kindly.

"I am glad you did Phillip and"—she straightened up a little as if trying to gather strength—"I am very, very, thankful for what—you have told—me tonight. It has—shocked me a little—but I will get over that."

"And believe me, my dear little cousin," he took her hand and held it in his own, "I am very sorry that the truth in this case was so unpleasant. Of course, you will do as you think best, Pearl, but it would seem perhaps only fair that Mr. Douglass should know of what he is accused. Though far short in so many respects to the claims of true manhood, I believe you might make him feel the justness of your decision."

"I will be just," she answered.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

REJECTED.

LOVE—strange, mystic word! How countless its interpretations! Love—that beholds with the eye of spirit, not with the eye of flesh. Love—that eludes the touch of defilement and dwells with the noble and sincere. Love— that springs from that which is eternal and reaches to that within the veil!

Margaret going to her room after leaving Phillip cried out in the first agony of her disillusionment—"it cannot, it cannot, be love!" Yet what she had been experiencing these last few weeks, and perhaps long before Douglass had spoken to her, was love, though it had existed between her pure soul and an ideal of her own creation. When the veil was torn from the image to which she had been clinging, when that which had been concealed behind it stood revealed in all its deformity; she shrank in horror at the sight. The agony came not because of separation from *this* idol—there never could have been a union—but because of the rude awakening to the fact that the personality she loved existed but in her own fancy.

In spite of the agony of heart, the torture and

perplexing of mind she did not hesitate an instant as to her future action.

Two lines of duty were clear to her—to tell Douglass of her decision without delay and to tear from her heart that which now if persisted in, could be no other than passion—passion which she felt to be abhorred by her own soul. She wrote a note asking him to call the next evening, finding they could be safe from disturbances, at the time.

When Margaret told her aunt that she would not be able to accept, with them, an invitation to the Chattertons, the arrangement was quite satisfactory to Mrs. Lansdowne. She was not a woman to hold on stubbornly to a forlorn hope. She was too practical for that. Long since, she had given up all expectation of a matrimonial alliance between one of her daughters and the heir of the Douglass House. She had been astounded to the last degree at the very marked attentions of Douglass to Margaret; she could not understand the cause; but she was not the person to spend precious time in trying to solve what seemed so hopelessly insoluble. She took it for granted that the evidence of her senses was to be relied upon and she began to plan accordingly.

She had also been growing more and more sure as she watched the two cousins closely, that while Margaret's feeling toward Phillip was only that of a sister, his for her was of a radically different sort; yet she was confident that with the girl once lost

to him he would, with good planning on their part, become enamored of Katheryn or Elinoir. That love could be transferred from one object to another with ease and alacrity, Mrs. Lansdowne never doubted. Her affections were constructed after that fashion and she believed herself to be not unlike the rest of the human race. It was then, with feelings not simply of resignation to the inevitable, but of certain pleasurable anticipations for the future, that Mrs. Lansdowne, with her three daughters, stepped out from her home and left Margaret behind to receive her invited guest.

They had been gone only a few minutes when Douglass was announced.

"I came early," he said, eagerly, when he had taken a seat by her side. "I could not wait. I wanted to know my fate. These two weeks have been years to me, if time may be counted by the anxiety with which it is filled." He noticed something peculiar in the expression of her face which made him feel ill at ease. He thought his impetuosity might have annoyed her. "You will forgive my abruptness, will you not?" he asked. "It is a case of life or death for me. I—I—did not surely misinterpret your summons?"

He was looking at her with all the passionate ardor of a young lover whose heart is feeling for the first time the movings of that sweetly solemn and mysterious power of love. He reached out his hand. It just touched the filmy lace that fell from

her rounded wrist. She moved back from him the very fraction of an inch, but he was conscious of the movement. She fastened her dark, brilliant eyes upon his face.

"Mr. Douglass do not say anything more, I beg of you. I have nothing to offer you in return but words of hopelessness and disappointment. I have asked you here tonight that you may receive my irrevocable answer. It is this—I can never be your wife! I am sorry if I have given you reason to believe it might be otherwise. I am doubly sorry that I was not able to give my answer long ago—the first night you asked for it."

The eager, joyous look died out of his face instantly. For once the Douglass lip did not shorten in disdain. An expression of frozen composure rested on his features. "Miss Stewart, if your face did not swear that you were not trifling with me (after the manner of women) I would not remain another moment in your presence. To prove that I still believe in and respect you, I ask in the name of justice, tell me why you have so spoken? Tell me, tell me what is this awful lie that is standing between us!"

He was not prepared for the answer which his ill-advised expression called forth. If a moment since her self-possession had seemed about to desert her, it was not so now. She felt the strength and power of will returning to her in full measure.

"You are right," she replied, looking him in the

face, "a lie does stand between us. It is the lie of your own double life. You have been living it for years, and with it still black in your heart, you dared to ask me to share it. Let the woman who has helped you to entangle yourself in its meshes still share it, as she has shared it in the past!"

The angry blood surged into his face, then receded, leaving it white and set. His eyes had in them that which a less courageous nature would have feared as suggesting some reckless outburst of passion.

"What right have you to bring such charges?" he asked, his voice quivering with suppressed wrath. She saw he was attempting to have it out on the basis of being unjustly maligned. The fact irritated her and lessened him in her estimation.

"It has come to me very direct. Nothing but positive proof to the contrary could satisfy me," she answered. "If I have been hasty in my acceptance of the report, it has been because of the awful shock and pain of the disclosure. The recoil was proportionate to the blow. Can you, Mr. Douglass, disclaim my accusation? Of whatever else you are guilty, I believe that you will deal fairly with me. What is your answer?"

His eyes, till now, unflinching in their glance, fell. Guilt, face to face with truth could not stand the test. He arose from her side and moved his foot nervously upon the rug at his feet.

"I cannot understand why you have arraigned

me so severely. What you have accused me of is held to be no unpardonable sin among the class of society in which I move. Perhaps it is not sufficiently exacting for your moral code. It is certainly more merciful. It is not my habit to accuse others of a wrong with which I am blamed, but in justice to myself, I say now that the fault for which you call me to task is one with which many men, honored and heads of honored famillies, might be charged.

"When I asked you to become my wife, I intended to put aside my past life, with all its mistakes—pardon me if I do not call them crimes—and live a life worthy of any noble woman. I have acted as thousands of men are acting every day."

"And so you think," she spoke calmly now, "that the past is something which you can lay aside, as you might a cast-off garment? You do not believe that what you do becomes a part of yourself—is indeed your very self, however you may change your environment? Is it nothing that for years you have been living a life which you would not have dared to publish before the world—a life which your own heart even could never have condoned? Did you think, because you moved in what the world might call—a higher circle socially than that in which I moved, that I would feel recompensed for the virtue which was lacking, by the position which you offered?" He lifted his head as if to repudiate the charge. "You were mistaken, Mr. Douglass, if

you did," she continued. "My parents taught me what true nobility is; but it is not in external show or in so-called culture. It is a striving to live up to a lofty ideal! I have grown to womanhood with such principles so rooted and grounded into my very being that now, involuntarily, I shrink from vice among those who have no excuse, absolutely no excuse for its existence unless—it is this: that those who might put upon it the seal of their disapproval do not and will not do so. My attitude seems to surprise you. Is it, then, such a novelty that a woman refuses to accept for her life companion one, who, in spite of wealth and position, would if seen in the full light of truth, fall below her slightest notice?" She waited for his reply. Great beads of perspiration stood upon his forehead. He sank down in the chair upon which he had been resting his hand.

"I do mean it," he answered. He buried his face in his hands for a moment. Then he lifted it and turned toward her with sudden, pathetic earnestness.

"For God's sake, give me credit for this," he pleaded. "I have treated you in no way different from any woman to whom I might have offered my name. Will you believe me, or have I sunken too low in your estimation even for that?" he asked, miserably.

Her heart softened. The first fire of indignation toward him was slowly dying out. Pity—that

noblest, yet most dangerous, element of a woman's nature, was taking possession of her.

"I believe you," she said, simply. There were tears in her eyes, but he did not see them; perhaps it was well for both that he did not.

"I hope," she continued, with a little quiver in her voice, "that you will feel that I am acting justly; that—that—I could not in respect to myself have acted otherwise."

He raised his head then and looked at her. "You might have acted differently, if you had consulted your feelings instead of your judgment? Forgive me," he said, humbly, "for asking. You cannot know what it would mean to me in the great barren stretch of life to know that a noble woman had loved me. I will not take undue advantage of your answer," he added, with sad earnestness. "I am a gentleman in act, if not in heart. Tell me, just this once—Do you love me?"

He waited and she sat quite still. The hopeless droop of the strong, young figure, the bent head, the pathetic draw of the mouth seemed to indicate to him a conflict in her breast. But presently she raised her eyes, so grave, so truthful—how could he doubt them!—and answered calmly, without faltering:

"No, I do not love you!"

"Might you have loved me if it had all been otherwise?

"If this—this lie, had not been between us? Can you grant that one grain of comfort to me?"

"If it would give you *comfort*. I feared it would make you more miserable."

"Nothing could do that now," he said, wearily.

"I could have loved you—had you been what I dreamed you were. But it was only a dream. You understand?"

"I understand," he answered. Then suddenly he noticed how worn she looked.

"Forgive me, for so prolonging this strain. I will not detain your longer." He turned and walked into the hall. She followed.

"It was chilly when I came in. I'll button my overcoat, I think." Then he took his hat.

"Good-bye," she said, and stretched one cold little hand toward him. He clasped it hungrily—greedily.

"Thank you," he said, softly, "the dream and the hand clasp may save me from perdition, if anything will. They cannot be taken away, can they?"

She forced open her dry lips. "No, they cannot be taken away."

Then the door closed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SURPRISE.

THE next morning, when Mrs. Lansdowne entered the library before breakfast, to her surprise she did not find Margaret. As long as her niece had been a guest in her home she had never failed to be downstairs almost an hour before the rest of the family.

Mrs. Lansdowne was disappointed, even irritated, at Margaret's absence. She had made a special effort to be early, that she might have a private conversation with her niece. As Margaret's guardian, she felt the duty incumbent upon her of knowing how matters were progressing between the girl and Douglass. She had fully expected to see her when she returned from her neighbor's the evening before, and, greatly to her surprise, she had found the library vacated and Margaret retired. It was an early hour for lovers, and the circumstance had impressed her a little unfavorably. She was really now, she told herself, quite anxious for the union between Margaret and Douglass, an alliance that would undoubtedly reflect glory on her family. She was thinking over these prospective advantages when she heard Margaret's step on the stair.

"My dear, you can no longer consider yourself the champion early riser of the family. You have broken your record this morning," exclaimed Mrs. Lansdowne, as her niece entered the room.

"I had such a severe headache, Aunt Frances, I concluded to lie still a while to see whether it would not pass over."

Mrs. Lansdowne noticed the shadows under the girl's eyes, the unaccustomed palor on her cheek, and she was not slow to draw conclusions. The early separation of Margaret and Douglass the previous evening, Margaret's late appearance, coupled with her severe headache, were circumstances connecting themselves casually with each other, to her mind. She was, however, too true a diplomat to give verbal expression to such an inference.

"I am sorry, dear; did you not sleep well, last night?" Mrs. Lansdowne assumed an expression of concerned inquiry. "I did not sleep very well the early part of the night," Margaret responded, and then lapsed into silence. She took a chair near to her aunt.

Mrs. Lansdowne concluded to change her tactics. She stretched out her hand and laid it affectionately upon Margaret's.

"Margaret, Margaret," she said in a tone of playful chiding, "I do believe you are homesick! My dear, I am surprised! I thought you proof against such disease."

Margaret smiled. Mrs. Lansdowne saw that it was a poor, forced effort.

"Will you deny it?" pressed her aunt.

"You think I am homesick, because I happened not to sleep very well for once and in consequence have a headache?" asked Margaret.

"O, well, well, my dear, I will not press the question further. You will be all right in a day or two, if it should be only that. Come, I have a far more important inquiry to put; but I will not be answered by questions," she added, laughingly, shaking a jewelled finger at Margaret. "I want to know if it is not time to bring Mr. Douglass to the point! I dare say, you dear unsophisticated girl, that you would tell me you do not know the meaning of the term—but you must learn. It takes the city to broaden one's ideas. I know, for I have lived, you see, in both city and country. Mr. Douglass is a grand catch, Margaret. Any girl would give her head to get him. He has shown more serious attention to you than to any one else in Beechdale. I have been watching it all, my dear. Remember, I feel a mother's interest and love for my dead sister's child." Here Mrs. Lansdowne was apparently in danger of an overflow of feeling. She rallied, however, and continued. "I am perfectly aware that you have very pronounced views regarding decorum, Margaret, and these are very well in their proper places, but do not carry them to extremes. Love must be dealt with peculiarly.

A woman can easily draw on a man, and without losing, you understand, the smallest portion of her own self-respect, indeed, without the man having the least suspicion himself of the harmless strategy. Now, that is just the course you must pursue, Margaret. No one could carry it out more gracefully and affectionately than you. You would know just what to say and just what to do. In short, my dear, *make* Malcolm Douglass propose!"

Mrs. Lansdowne paused, perhaps to note the effect of her words. The answer certainly came before she expected it. "Aunt Frances, the result you so desire, is already a thing of the past, but I assure you there was no covert attempt on my part to bring it about."

Mrs. Lansdowne fairly gasped out her astonishment: "Margaret, has he really proposed?"

"He asked me two weeks ago to become his wife," she replied, measuredly, and with averted eyes. Mrs. Lansdowne saw the girl's breast heave convulsively. "Last night," continued Margaret, "he came for his answer, and—"

"O, Margaret, you didn't—" broke in her aunt, hysterically.

"Refuse him? Yes!" finished the girl, proudly.

"Goodness!" ejaculated Mrs. Lansdowne. Perhaps she felt at this critical point an instinctive turning to an omniscient power, for it would certainly take a higher intellect than her own to comprehend such a human paradox as confronted her.

"Margaret, are you mad? What do you mean? Do you realize what you have thrown away?"

"Fully," answered her niece. "I have thrown away an offer to become the wife of a man who thinks that a past life of self-indulgence can be cast from him at will, and he still remain fitted to satisfy the noblest and highest cravings of a pure woman. It is not necessary to tell you how this condemning information was brought to me. This is sufficient proof of its truth—he did not deny it. I believe this good of him, now, however, he did not intentionally offer an insult to me. O, Aunt Frances, however willing some may be to slacken the reins on morality—I cannot, cannot! Think of the sacredness of the marriage relation and consider for one moment how it must appear in the eye of God when that relation is so heedlessly, ruthlessly dealt with! To me there can be no marriage when there is no union of souls. Truth unites and perfidy separates. The ceremony performed at the altar no more makes a marriage than creed makes religion. Mr. Douglass' wealth, social position, pedigree are nothing to me, absolutely nothing! I bring to him a pure womanhood, he offers to me a debauched and corrupted manhood. These are the conditions that are lasting. Feeling as I do, do you not think I have done right to act as I did?"

Mrs. Lansdowne's wandering mind came back to present facts at the question, to tell the truth this little moral homily by her niece had grown weari-

some to her long before it ended. She had gone off on a mental sojourn, where she beheld herself and family the cynosure of every eye as connections not only of Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne—but allied to the proud and ancient House of Douglass. She saw, in her ecstatic vision, Margaret arranged in satins and precious Douglass jewels, and moving about her magnificent drawing room among a group of select friends. Her own daughters were in a fair way of allying themselves with the very cream of American aristocracy, perhaps—! She would have soon, doubtless, been standing at European courts, had not Margaret's question struck the bell of doom to all her gossamer castles. They melted away instantly. She was back once more in her own library, and conscious of the crushing truth that had shattered so many hopes and plans.

Mrs. Lansdowne had some vague, subconscious knowledge of Margaret's defense of her action, but she would have been utterly unable, even though she had paid close attention to it, to have entered into the discussion with anything approaching sympathetic interest. It would have taken far more than a few moment's consideration of the subject to give Mrs. Lansdowne any higher realization of morals than she possessed.

"You are a strange girl, Margaret!" was Mrs. Lansdowne's reply to her niece's question, and the sigh which followed revealed to Margaret how ut-

terly futile had been the attempt to vindicate her action. Viewing Margaret critically a moment, Mrs. Lansdowne supplemented her words with a grave and prophetic observation:

"I am very much afraid, my dear, that you will never get married!"

Whether Mrs. Lansdowne would have considered it worth her while to continue the conversation in a last desperate attempt to change Margaret's views and so induce her to reverse her decision is a question. At the very moment a piercing shriek from above made the hearts of both women fairly stand still.

CHAPTER XXXV.

ELOPEMENT.

WHEN Mrs. Lansdowne was able to get the better of her alarms, she cried:

"What is it, Katheryn? Is the house on fire?"

By this time both Margaret and her aunt were at the foot of the stairs, where Katheryn, wide-eyed and trembling, stood in her morning gown, one hand on the balustrade, the other clutching a little piece of white paper.

"Mamma," she panted, "Maud has gone—run away! She left this! She has gone with—with—Uncle Frederick's coachman!"

Mrs. Lansdowne gave one gasp and fell, without a word in a helpless heap at Margaret's feet. Katheryn's cry brought Elinoir and Yzabel from their rooms, and their excited wails and questions only added to the pandemonium.

"O, Margaret, what will we do?" cried Elinoir, wringing her hands. "Think of the disgrace—a coachman! O! O! O!"

"We must think of Aunt Frances, and of Maud afterward," answered Margaret. "Katheryn get some water! Quick!"

In a few moments Margaret was bathing her aunt's forehead and lips. Her efforts to restore her were soon rewarded, and the color began to creep back once more. A faint sigh escaped her lips, and the wretched mother became conscious again of the awful realities of life. With the aid of Elinoir and Margaret, she was supported to a couch in the library, and Katheryn ran over to break the news to her uncle and aunt.

The next ten minutes brought all too surely the verification of Maud's message. James was not to be found, nor had he been seen that morning. Mrs. Lansdowne sent word that she and her husband would be over immediately.

This news precipitated another hysterical attack from Mrs. Lansdowne.

"Aunt Frances," pleaded Margaret, almost desperate," you will certainly bring on a serious illness if you do not control yourself better. Try to bear up under the trouble. I know the blow is an awful one, but—"

"O, Margaret, do not talk about 'control' to me. You know nothing of what I suffer—you *can* know nothing. Wait until you are a mother, to see your children grow up, watched, cared for, planned for during every waking hour, only to bring disgrace upon you and your family. O, it is too hor-hor-hor-ible! If I had never raised her carefully, it would be different. But everyone knows just how I have slaved for my children. Dr.

Winthrop has often said to me, 'Mrs. Lansdowne, you are a model mother, one in a thousand.' How many times I have threatened to send Maud to the convent. God knows, I wish I had done so before she lived to disgrace all of us! How can I ever look Frederick and Clarissa in the face! To think of bringing this awful humiliation upon them and, O, the Chattertons will feel it so! I wouldn't be surprised if they would try to break the engagement between Yzabel and Fletcher. The whole thing will be in the paper before night and everybody will be talking about us. Nobody will want to marry the girls after this disgrace."

"O, Aunt Frances, these results you speak of are all the weavings of your imagination. No one who has any consideration, charity or common sense will ever dream of casting upon Maud's mother and sisters any infamy because of her wrong-doing. Try to cheer up! Mr. Lansdowne is a keen, level-headed man. He will know just what steps to take in the matter, I am sure. Maud may be traced and brought back before night, a penitent girl."

"She is beyond penitence," broke in Mrs. Lansdowne, this time wrathfully. "I am sure she has had instruction enough of a religious nature to keep her from doing wrong. You ought to have seen Margaret, the pains the girls and I took when she had her first communion last year. She knew the catechism perfectly, didn't she, Katheryn? And of her own accord during Lent she did without honey

and salad and—and—there were several things more, weren't there, Elinoir? I know Dr. Harcourt was especially delighted when he heard of it. He told me privately that he thought Maud's spiritual nature was very strongly developed. And now—now—think of it—to run away with a coachman, a low-down mortal like that! O, if I had but listened to Father Frohman! He told me that a convent life would be just the thing for Maud. I suppose he knew her better than I, whose eyes were so entirely blinded by a mother's love."

"Mamma, here comes Uncle Frederick and Aunt Clarissa. Shall I let them in?" asked Yzabel.

"Yes, child, there is no need to have Betty come around when it is unnecessary. You better go, I think, all of you, and try to eat. Breakfast will be served in a moment. I will try to bear up as well as I can." Yzabel received her relatives, and after a few whispered words of greeting directed them to her mother, and left them.

Margaret heard at intervals from behind the closed doors of the library her aunt's periodic little shrieks. By and by, however, they became farther and farther apart, and at last, to the infinite satisfaction of the little company in the dining room, ceased altogether.

When the almost untasted meal was over, the four girls went softly upstairs. There, they talked over the awful disaster that had befallen them, the sisters condemning their mother severely for not

ruling in a more high-handed manner this incorrigible daughter.

"O, girls, do not blame your mother so," pleaded Margaret. "We are none of us wise enough to fasten the remote causes of Maud's action upon any one. Perhaps, if you yourselves had spoken to her a little more kindly than you often did; had made her feel more as one of you, rather than as one banished from the inner circle of the home; had treated her not so much as if she were a child, but more as one beginning to feel the stirrings of young womanhood; perhaps, had you done all these things, you might have helped Maud to check wrong desire and more wrong action."

"O, of course, blame us!" sobbed Katheryn. "You know nothing about it. You have not been tried beyond endurance with her petulance and her insufferable dullness. Mamma was too lenient, that was all! She should have put her in a convent long ago, as we wanted her to do; but, no, Uncle Frederick had offered to educate her at Byrn Mawr, and to Bryn Mawr she must go whether she wished to or not. I really believe the horror of that martyrdom led her to take the first opportunity to escape."

And so they talked and argued, until they heard Mr. Lansdowne depart. Then Katheryn slipped down to her mother. She returned shortly, with the encouraging news that she was quiet and that Uncle Frederick had gone to find what he could

of the runaways. He would put detectives immediately to work and if possible apprehend the pair before many hours had passed.

In the meantime there was nothing to do but wait—the hardest of all duties imposed upon an anxious heart.

The day dragged its slow length by. Hours weighted down with sorrow, move but slowly. Twilight came on, with its phantoms in every corner, its voices in every sighing wind and creaking door; then darkness descended, the impenetrable curtain that seems to mock every attempt to fathom the mysteries which it hides. Still no word had come as to the whereabouts of the erring girl.

Margaret was the only one who could in any way be accounted calm. Mrs. Lansdowne, when not in an apathetic state from sheer exhaustion, oscillated between a tirade against Maud and foreboding speculations as to how her daughter's conduct would affect their social status.

At about ten in the evening Mr. Lansdowne came to say that it was almost certain the two had been traced to Bailey, fifty miles from Leyton, and that the authorities there had been notified to hold any parties answering to the description of the runaways. With this consolation, the family, under advice of Mr. Lansdowne, retired to get, if possible, a little rest after the excitement of the day.

Margaret's own burdens had been unselfishly relegated to a secondary place when in the presence

of what she felt must be a mightier sorrow than her own. But now in her room and by herself all the experiences of the last two days swept over her with terrific force. She became suddenly aware that these experiences through which she had been called upon to pass had made terrible inroads upon her physical strength. Now that she needed no longer, for the sake of others, to draw upon her surplus energy, she felt how much the constant demand for self-control had really cost her. The very well spring of vitality seemed exhausted. All exuberance of spirit, the superabundant life which she had always felt seemed suddenly now to have left her, and with this physical weakness came the knowledge that she was for the first time in her life bereft of the support of human love and sympathy.

She had been living, during all these weeks of her stay amid the glamorous scenes of the Palace of Pleasure; but the brilliant hues were now fading into sickly pallor. She found herself longing with an infinite longing, as we all do, when the dreams of our present are suddenly shattered, for the sweet experiences of the past. Beechdale, with its broad avenues, its palatial homes, its glittering assemblies, its laughter and its shams, melted away. She was back once more at Clover Farm, seated by the side of a gray-haired man, her hand upon his shoulder, his hand resting tenderly upon her head. And Phillip came and stood beside her, his dark

eyes looking into hers. Their light seemed to penetrate her very soul. "Phillip," she cried out, and pressed her hands upon her brow. But Phillip, deep in slumber, at that very moment, was curled up upon his lounge, where he had thrown himself in very weariness of mind and body, and pressed against his lips was a picture of Margaret.

The sound of her own voice startled her into a realization of her surroundings. She was once more in the present; yet back from the past stole an aroma that soothed her tortured nerves. It seemed suddenly as though a great weight had been lifted from her. She had left it somewhere within the land of shadows, whither she had gone. Soon she sank into a quiet, peaceful slumber, as had not blessed her eyes for many weary nights.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RETURN.

THE next morning when Margaret entered her aunt's room, she found her sitting propped up in bed with a light blue shawl thrown gracefully about her shoulders. On her niece's entrance, Mrs. Lansdowne's tears began forthwith to flow. "I have not slept a wink —not a wink," she quavered. "O, mamma," cried Katheryn, coming in just at the moment of her mother's assertion, "Betty told me, when I asked her a few moments ago, that she found you sleeping when she came in to bring you a little fruit."

"Betty was entirely mistaken, Katheryn. How do you suppose that I could sleep and my child wandering, God knows where? I tell you, I never slept a wink! Hand me that *eau de cologne* from my dresser. I told Betty not to put it so far away. I did not want to call any of *you* from rest to wait on *me*. Ah, no one understands the sorrows of a mother until she herself has had the sad experience. Katheryn, what is it that Shakespeare says about the few thanks one gets for rearing their

children? You know I gave it last Saturday afternoon as a 'gleaming' at the Shakespeare Club."

"O, I am sure I do not know, mamma; do not ask me. I can't keep up with your clubs and my own, too."

"Do you mean the quotation from King Lear:

"More bitter than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child!"

asked Margaret, pitying her aunt's perplexity.

"Yes, that is it! Ah, how prophetic it was that I should have quoted such a couplet! I suppose all the members will think of it, too, when they hear about this awful disgrace. O, how can I ever, ever look into any one's face again! How I dread to see the paper. Frederick said he would do his best to keep it out of all of them, but I fear—I fear. Katheryn, ring for the paper, child. I must have it!" But before Katheryn had risen to do her mother's bidding Yzabel flung open the door, followed by Elinoir with the fateful paper in her hands.

Mrs. Lansdowne gave an incipient scream and extended her jewelled left hand to Elinoir. Mrs. Lansdowne, never, no matter what the distractions of the situation, made the mistake of flourishing the wrong hand.

"Is there—any—thing in the paper?" she asked, excitedly.

"Lots!" announced Elinoir. "I slipped downstairs, half an hour ago to get it. There is nearly a column right on the first page. Shall I read it?"

"Give me a glass of port, first, to calm my nerves. Thanks! Now, I suppose I may try to endure this extra torture!"

"Pshaw! it isn't so bad, mamma. I suppose Uncle Frederick couldn't keep it out entirely, but they have treated us very fairly," said Elinoir.

Mrs. Lansdowne sighed, lay back on her plilows, glanced in a cheval mirror opposite and composed herself to listen.

Elinoir began to read in a voice hardly tuned to humiliation:

ROMANCE IN HIGH LIFE.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing Invades the Fold of Beechdale Aristocracy.

Maud Lansdowne, Niece of Frederick William Lansdowne, Enticed From Her Home by the Latter's Coachman.

"Shall I go on, mamma?"

"Of course, go on," broke in Katheryn, "leaning over her sister's shoulder. "What do you suppose she would want to have you stop in the midst of it for?"

Elinoir, emphatically, if not politely urged, resumed:

"A shock will be given this morning to Beech-

dale society, such as doubtless it has seldom before experienced, when it is learned that the youngest daughter of Mrs. Frances Lansdowne of Beech Ave., Beechdale, left her home sometime early yesterday morning, before the family were astir, in company with James Blakely, a coachman in the employ of Mr. Frederick William Lansdowne, uncle of the girl.

"Miss Maud is but fifteen years old, though physically very well developed, for her age; of exceedingly attractive appearance, cultured and refined in manner. Of high intellectual endowments, she yet possessed a certain native candor of manner that marks her as still possessing the spontaneity of action and fascinating impulsiveness of childhood.

"All that wealth and love could suggest has been hers, and never has she in any way shown the slightest tendency for low associates. She has been, however, during the past year, thrown in close and frequent association with young Blakely, who drove her every morning to Miss Huntington's School.

"Blakely is not a bad-looking fellow, and if dressed in the latest cut would make a fairly good appearance. Those who know him, say that he has rather a captivating manner for one of his class, and in this fact, perhaps, lies the solution of the mystery. Blakely, recognizing the simplicity and inexperience of his young victim, took advantage

of the opportunities given him and ingratiated himself little by little into the child's unsuspecting heart. Nothing in the girl's former actions or words has in the least led her friends to suspect anything wrong, and it is believed that the act was one purely of impulse on her part, however, premeditated, it may have been on that of her diabolical tempter. Detectives have been detailed on the matter and everything is being done to apprehend the missing pair, and it is thought they will be traced before many hours. The family will have the heartfelt sympathy of a host of friends, who hope with them for a speedy and happy conclusion to the little episode.

"As has been stated previously, the girl is a niece of Frederick William Lansdowne, whose palatial residence in Beechdale is known far and wide. Ever since his brother's death, Mr. Lansdowne has been a father to his four lovely nieces, and this blow falls heavily upon a heart so recently bereaved by the death of his only daughter, wife of Mr. Gerald Scranley-McClure, English consul to Berlin. Mr. Scranley-McClure is a son of the Egyptologist, Norton Scranley-McClure, and grandson of the late Sir Scranley-McClure of Scranley House, Berkshire."

"They certainly have treated the matter very impartially," remarked Mrs. Lansdowne, languidly, from her pillows, when Elinoir had closed in fine oratorical style:

"I suppose that is because we are so well known to the reporters, mamma," exclaimed Katheryn. "You see, Margaret, our names are so often in the papers they know all about us, and sometimes know more than we ourselves know. Reporters will never leave society people alone."

Margaret remembered a certain conversation between Miss Burton and some members of the family, on an occasion a few months previous, and she drew her own conclusions as to the unsolicited concern of newspaper reporters.

"I think, Katheryn," observed her mother, a little later, "it would be wise to telephone for Dr. Winthrop this morning. My nerves are in a wretched condition and there is no telling what I may still be called upon to pass through."

Mrs. Lansdowne had doubtless felt, long before the present moment, a crying need for Dr. Winthrop's pills and Dr. Winthrop's soothing tones. She had, however, fought against her own welfare, for her humiliation had been too great to allow her to see even the dear doctor. Now matters had taken on a decidedly different complexion. She was, at this moment, fairly swelling with pride, and a look of deep complacency was creeping over her features. "Where has Yzabel gone?" she inquired.

"Over to Phoebe's, mamma," answered Elinoir. "She is so fearful of the results of this affair, especially since it has come out publicly. But, really, I think her forebodings are all useless after this ar-

ticle. Here is Betty, mamma, with your breakfast. We will go down now to eat. I will telephone to Dr. Winthrop."

When the girls reached the library they saw Mr. Lansdowne coming across the lawn. Katheryn opened the door just as he stepped upon the porch.

"O, Uncle Frederick," she cried, "have you heard anything?"

"Yes," he answered, "I have encouraging news. A few moments ago I received a message. The two were stopped as they got off the train at Kranzburg. They had not been able to obtain a license. The message was brief, but they will arrive at Leyton this morning. I will see to everything. Tell your mother to keep calm. Your aunt has a severe neuralgic attack and cannot come over this morning. Good-bye."

Yzabel came in while the rest were still at the breakfast table. She was in high glee. Dear Fletcher had been lovely to her. He had almost fainted when she had proposed breaking the engagement because of the disgrace which Maud's actions might bring upon him.

Dr. Winthrop called shortly after, and what, with the remedial agencies he left behind, together with the frequent small doses of flattery he administered while present, Mrs. Lansdowne's nerves became at once so stimulated and she arose so many degrees higher in her own estimation, that the gratifying

result was a frame of mind, quite beyond the influence of earthly pain or sorrow.

It was nearly one o'clock before a message came to the waiting family that Maud was at last in the care of her uncle.

Margaret tried to persuade her aunt to dress and to be ready to receive her repentant daughter, but Mrs. Lansdowne had no such thought in mind. She felt that Maud needed an object lesson, and the one of a heart-broken and prostrated mother was not to be neglected.

Margaret felt that Maud was equally blameable with her companion, but she nevertheless saw what might have been the slowly accumulating causes for her action. Though Mrs. Lansdowne did not for an instant consider that she had been other than a model mother, Margaret had seen enough of the discipline used to know that the girl had never for a day experienced the true mother affection which she ought to have had. To Maud Lansdowne these years of childhood and young girlhood were but years of school drudgery and social seclusion. The only ray of light penetrating the darkness being the ever distant one of emancipation at eighteen. That the girl had been driven by misdirected discipline to seek the first opportunity to escape from these restrictions seemed to Margaret a most plausible inference.

"Mamma, what are we going to do with Maud?"

inquired Yzabel. "She has disgraced us and herself sufficiently for the rest of her natural life."

Mrs. Lansdowne looked intently at her rings for a few moments and applied her smelling salts; then she said, with the complacent tones of one who has come to the solution of a difficulty long wrestled with:

"I intend, Yzabel, to have her placed in the Ursuline Convent. I told your uncle to see Father Frohman at once. I have threatened this punishment enough, but with a mother's long suffering and mercy, I have withheld it. I will do so no longer. She must go immediately, to remain until she is eighteen. By that time she may be a better girl and her disgraceful conduct may have been in a measure forgotten."

Margaret could not remain silent. "O, Aunt Frances," she exclaimed, "do you not believe that Maud may have repented sincerely of this act? Might she not be reclaimed without secluding her in this manner? Perhaps, if she saw how this wrong of hers has crushed all your hearts, that, though such willfulness and deception would justly forfeit your confidence in her, you are willing to forgive and begin all over again, she might become a different girl?"

"You speak theoretically, Margaret, not practically," answered Mrs. Lansdowne. "You know very little of Maud's nature, which is and always has been unruly and entirely averse to restraint of any

kind. She has been allowed her own way too much instead of being subjected to restriction, as you seem to think. I am no longer able physically to bear the responsibility. I have literally given my life for my children. It is impossible, you should understand a mother's work."

Mrs. Lansdowne brought her teeth together with a snap. She began to apply her smelling salts now more vigorously, and to display premonitory symptoms of wounded feelings. Margaret recognized that any further reformatory plans on her part would be useless. She was pondering how she might direct further outbreak on her aunt's part, when Elinoir rushed in to say that her uncle's carriage had just come into sight.

Margaret felt she had no right to witness the humiliating home-coming and the meeting between Maud and her family; so, when the carriage entered the gateway, she went quickly and unnoticed to her own room.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

MAUD'S PUNISHMENT.

THE home-coming was over, the meeting of wronged mother and wayward daughter had taken place. From her room Margaret could hear her aunt's tones, now and then rising, hysterically and in the intervals her cousins' voices in heated dispute. Only once or twice did she recognize Maud's voice during the hours which followed her arrival. At last the door of Mrs. Lansdowne's room opened and she heard Maud's heavy footsteps turning in the direction of her own room.

When luncheon was served the girls partook of the meal alone.

"Does Maud seem to feel sorry for what she did?" inquired Margaret.

"You can get nothing from her," answered Elinoir. "Uncle Frederick said she seemed very much ashamed of herself when she saw him, and pleaded to be taken home at once."

"I suppose she had a fear that she might possibly be sent to the penitentiary for the remainder of her natural life," interposed Katheryn, with a sarcastic laugh. "Uncle Frederick, by the way, thinks it is

best to let the matter about Blakely drop, as it would only call for more publicity. He frightened the fellow so that he promised to leave here immediately and never let himself be seen again near Leyton, and the sooner we get Maud away the better. People's mouths will be closed then, perhaps."

"Does she know that she is to be sent to the convent?" asked Margaret.

"That is the trouble, now," answered Elinoir. "'Mamma told her that her patience was entirely exhausted; that she had made her mind up and that there would be no change in her purpose. Maud shut up in her old stubborn way, and mamma at last told her to go to her own room."

"Margaret," said Yzabel, "mamma would like you to go to see her after luncheon. She appears to fancy you. Perhaps you might be able to put her in a better frame of mind."

"She needn't attempt to persuade you to interfere in her behalf about the convent," broke in Katheryn. "To the convent she must go!"

Margaret was entirely willing to carry out her aunt's desire, and later, with a cup of steaming bouillon and a few crackers to act as reconcilers, she knocked at Maud's door. As this elicited no answer, Margaret concluded to try the effect of vocal persuasion.

Maud seemed to relent at the sound of her cousin's winning voice, and presently answered in a sort of hopeless way: "Come in!"

She was lying stretched out on her bed. It was quite evident that she had been crying. As Margaret's calm eyes searched her face, a crimson flush spread over it.

"Maud, I have brought you a little something to eat," Margaret began.

Maud gave an angry jerk of refusal and buried her face in her arms, but Margaret went on as though she had not noticed the act.

"You will feel much better, you know, when you have eaten something. Do not think, Maud, that I have come here to taunt you or to find fault. I am here as your friend, to help you, if I may. I know you are tired and wretched, but I think when you are rested and have eaten something you will feel less miserable. Everything then will look more bright. That is the reason I have brought you this. Won't you drink it to please me?"

There was a moment's silence, then Maud lifted her face, still with its sullen expression upon it.

"Do you know what I said to myself that I would do?" she asked.

Margaret smiled. "How could I? You did not tell me."

"Well—I—said--I—would never—eat—another bite! I'd die rather than go to that convent!"

The concentrated wrath that burned in the girl's eyes and distorted her features made Margaret shudder. What woeful gulf of separation here between mother and child, she thought.

"'Are they going to send me there?" she demanded.

"We will talk of that by and by, Maud. Now, I want you to eat this, will you not?"

There was a yielding expression on Maud's face.

"I knew you would," she said, following up her point of vantage and extending the tray toward her, as though she felt assured of its acceptance.

A smile, half-pouting, half good-natured, forced its difficult way over Maud's face as she took the food. Margaret was a psychologist of the modern school and believed that a rational mind could best be subserved under favoring physical conditions; indeed, she was assured there would be but small chance of coming to any harmonious conclusions through the medium of an empty stomach.

"Now, do you not feel better? Come, confess!" insisted Margaret, when the bouillon and crackers had disappeared, and Maud reluctantly yielded the point.

"You think I am awful, of course. Everybody does," blurted out Maud, suddenly.

"I didn't come here, I told you, Maud, to discuss what has happened. I—"

"What *did* you come for, then?" interrupted the girl. "That is all there is to talk about, that I know of."

"I think there is something else. I want to talk to you about being a better girl. Let us leave all

the bitter mistakes of the past alone—begin all over again, you know."

An angry flame leaped from Maud's eyes and she drew suspiciously away from the arm half encircling her.

"You've come have you, to get me to say I am willing to go to that dreadful convent, and stay till I'm eighteen? They're ashamed of me, and want to get me off. They know I'll fight against it to the last. If I go, I'll never rest till I climb the walls. They think you can soften me down. The rest can't keep their tempers long enough to work me over. I tell you, if that is what you came for, you may go. I'll never give in. I'd die first!"

She brought her clinched hand down upon a little mahogany table with such force as to make a delicate piece of Dresden leap in the air and fall to the floor, shattered into countless pieces.

"O, Maud!" cried Margaret, rebukingly. But Maud did not even look at the wreck she had made.

"Do you know why I ran away?" she continued. "To be free and to have somebody to care for me a little. Mamma doesn't. It's only her clubs and the girls' beaux she cares for. When I came 'out' then I was to have a fine party and everything I wanted. I got tired waiting. I couldn't stand it! I'm not a baby!"

Overcome by the fury of her passion, her overwrought feelings found a vent in scalding tears and

she sobbed as if the very depths of her insulted nature had been broken up.

"Poor child! Poor child!" breathed Margaret, softly. "Your mother and sisters do love you, but all the trouble lies right here, Maud; you do not understand them and they do not understand you, so everything has gone wrong, hasn't it?"

After awhile, when the paroxysm had somewhat abated, Margaret ventured to say:

"Now, Maud, you are younger than the others and you have grieved them so, too, and caused them so much anxiety—how much you cannot realize—could you not go to your mother after awhile, after all the bitterness has gone out of your heart, I mean, and tell her how sorry you are that you have made her suffer so, that you want them all to trust you once more. Don't you think you might be able to do that?" A sob came in answer. "She will know then that you love her and you will find out, I am sure, how she loves you."

Maud suddenly lifted her tear-stained face and said: "O, Margaret, do you think if I promised mamma I would be a good girl and would do just as she says, she would tell me that I would not have to go to the convent?"

"I cannot tell, Maud, about that. Do what I say first," answered Margaret, evasively. Her heart misgave her as she thought of the hopelessness of any such happy conclusion. "Won't you, O, won't you, dear Margaret," cried the poor child, despair-

ingly, "do all you can to keep me from being locked up? I believe I could be good if you would show me how."

"Yes, dear, I promise you I will," answered Margaret. "Now lie down and get perfectly calm before you see your mother again."

Margaret placed her hand on Maud's shoulder with a gentle persuasive pressure. Maud yielded to it without a demur, and Margaret bent down and imprinted a kiss on her cousin's tear-stained cheek and left her.

She went immediately to her aunt's room. Within the last few moments, because of a few words that Maud had said, a plan had flashed through her busy brain. She had faith that if it could be carried out, it would solve, not only Mrs. Lansdowne's difficulty, but at the same time free Maud from the terrors of convent life.

She found her aunt alone. "I have just left Maud," she began. "I think she feels sorry for what she has done, Aunt Frances."

"And well she might if she were capable of feeling, which she is not, or she could never have looked upon me lying almost at death's door from the shock, without a tremor. I told her Dr. Winthrop said I was in a very critical condition, and she never made a comment or shed a tear." With the contemplation of such an indignity, Mrs. Lansdowne broke completely down.

"Dear Aunt Frances, I know what a heavy trial

this whole matter is, but I have a plan to suggest when you are able to listen. I think it might result, perhaps, in getting affairs more favorably adjusted and at the same time in bringing comfort to both you and Maud."

Mrs. Lansdowne's curiosity was as easily aroused as a child's. She dried her eyes and settled herself to listen. "I agree with you," began Margaret, "that the best way to hush this whole matter up and to end the gossip is to send Maud away from here. It will be better for her, too. She needs to get away from everything that will remind her of the past. She is not wholly bad we all know. All she needs is to be made to look upon life in a nobler way—to have an ideal and strive toward it. Maud and I have gotten along well together. I have been able often to influence her in little things, perhaps I might in matters of greater moment also. Her heart is softened and she will be easily worked upon. Aunt Frances, give her to me instead of sending her to the convent! Let me take her home with me to the fresh country air and the simple, quiet life as it is lived at Clover Farm."

She marked the frown of dissent upon her aunt's brow, but she continued. "We will take long walks in the beautiful spring days, and who can tell but what the sweet influence from the awakening heart of nature may strike a responsive chord in her own breast. Forgive me, Aunt Frances, if I seem to go beyond what is my right, but I feel so deeply on

this subject. I cannot believe that virtue was or ever will be produced by compulsion. It can spring only from the free working of the human will. O, let me have her, let me try!"

She clasped her hands together with the sudden passionate earnestness of one pleading for a life. Such fervor as stirred Margaret Stewart's soul at that moment is the spirit of prevailing prayer. It was lost upon the mother, but the divine force was not expended for naught; no spiritual energy can be. Maud Lansdowne's life forever after would be better for that prayer. It would follow her through eternity. The mother might modify its healing power, she could not utterly destroy its potency.

"Margaret, it is kind of you to take this interest in Maud. It is more than she deserves, I assure you," answered Mrs. Lansdowne, blandly, though in determined tones. "You do not understand Maud, however, as well as I—her mother. I have pronounced her punishment. I cannot break my word. I have threatened, now I will perform. To go with you would be no punishment. She needs the bitter, not the sweet. There has been far too much leniency used with her."

But Margaret could see no abundance in the girl's life—only awful, awful lack. She felt that the girl's nature needed to be subjected to the additional method of reform. Something needed to be added, not taken from her nature.

"O, Aunt Frances, forgive me, but I cannot, cannot see it that way," she cried.

"I am her mother," was the answer, indicating an unalterable decision.

"Well, if it seems best to you, Aunt Frances," consented Margaret, wearied at last with the futile argument.

Mrs. Lansdowne heaved a sigh of relief. She felt she had gained her point by good reasoning. She could afford to be a little more confidential now that Margaret looked upon the matter sensibly.

"You see, my dear, I have my child's future to consider from all standpoints. You not being her mother cannot see them all. I must look at her future from a social standpoint, as well as a moral. It will be better for her socially to go to a convent. It is society's edict for waywardness. You understand? There is a tone about it which will work to her best interests in the future. Now, my dear, this is a little piece of gossip I am going to tell, so you will not repeat it, of course. Mrs. Chatterton sent Phoebe to the same convent when she was a girl. She was very wild, but when she returned the girls simply flocked about her because she had spent three or four years at the Ursuline Convent in Philadelphia. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE week that followed Maud's return was filled with bustle and excitement in preparation for her departure. After a day or so of dogged silence she began to show symptoms of relenting and took a little feminine pride in her outfit. Through Father Frohman's persuasive words, supplemented by Sister Carricena's kind manner and pleasing pictures drawn of her future home, she departed in a tolerably resigned, if not wholly cheerful mood.

As a conclusion to her daughter's romantic adventure there appeared in the *Herald* a little item in regard to her future plans of interest to the curious Beechdalians, and Mrs. Lansdowne was delighted with Miss Burton's version of the affair. She really felt a few vibrations of the familiar thrill of triumph when she read it, and a few days after her maternal anxieties were set entirely at rest when she received a letter from Maud.

Mrs. Lansdowne had now recovered her wonted strength and spirits, and was down stairs once more, for there was no longer necessity for the object lesson heretofore enforced for Maud's spiritual

profit. Mrs. Lansdowne read the letter aloud at the breakfast table.

"Dear mamma: (it ran)

"I am here and the convent is a very nice place. The Mother Superior is so kind to me, and the Sisters, too. There are lots of nice girls here. Camilla Tracy, I like very much. Her mother came to see her yesterday, and when she knew I was a niece of Uncle Frederick she said that Camilla and I must be very goods friends. Camilla is awfully rich. They have a summer home at Newport. Camilla wants me to spend the summer with her there the year I am out. Won't that be grand?

"I go to Mass every morning. Camilla and I know when to bow almost every time, because we have both gone to high church. We are going to fast a good deal during Lent. All the nice girls are.

"Good-bye, with love,

"MAUD."

"P. S. Be sure to tell me whether I can go to Newport. Camilla wants to know, and then she will write to her mother."

"I think I did just the right thing for Maud," exclaimed Mrs. Lansdowne, after finishing the letter. "Surely, as Dr. Harcourt said, 'the Lord will watch over the fatherless and give wisdom to guide the orphan.' How true it is!" Mrs. Lansdowne's eyes were drenched in tears of thankfulness. "Dr. Harcourt," she continued, addressing Margaret, "thoroughly believes, as a high churchman, in the benefi-

cial results of retirement and fasting to the spiritual nature. He is very high church, you know. Indeed, he has an altar and crucifix in his own room. I think high church appeals so to one's spiritual nature."

"Well, Aunt Frances," replied Margaret, "I can say with all my heart, that I hope it may turn out to the advancement of Maud's highest needs."

And so the subject was closed.

Now that the house had settled down to its normal condition, Margaret began to be possessed once more with a longing for home that could not be stifled.

Excitement over, and the tension on nerves lessened, every part of her seemed with united voice to cry out for the sweet quiet of home. The day after Maud's letter she went out for her usual morning walk, and with the feeling more strongly upon her than ever, she began to plan in earnest for her departure.

As she passed the Park she heard a quick step on the gravelled path. The step seemed familiar, but she feared to look that way. In another moment a Scotch collie dashed up alongside of her and barked out his joyous greeting. She was positive that the master was close at hand, and her heart began to throb heavily.

The animal evidently felt itself disregarded, and determined to win her attention. It made a clumsy leap in the air and threw its huge body against her

with such force that for a second she staggered backward. "Down, Jasper! Down!" called a voice, sternly, from behind, whose tones she knew too well to mistake. Though she dreaded the meeting she preferred it rather than to exhibit any discourtesy of manner. She laid her hand gently on the dog's head and turned toward his master with a smile.

"I am sorry, Miss Stewart," he said, lifting his hat, "that Jasper has forgotten his manners. He seldom takes such liberties with ladies. I presume with you he considers himself a privileged character. He caught sight of you a long distance off and made a dash before I was aware of his intention."

His voice was clear and genial as usual, and he was smiling upon her as if the same cordial relations existed between them as of yore.

"No harm done, be assured, Mr. Douglass. Jasper is a dear fellow."

She looked him full in the face, and this time noticed a change there. He was smiling, but the half-cynical, half good-natured light she knew so well was gone. He struck his cane with a sort of nervous energy against the curb.

"I hope," he said after an embarrassed pause between them, "that you do not think I intentionally sought this meeting. It should never have been, as well for my own sake as for yours if I could have forestalled it. I am going away tomorrow--

going down South—with a friend, so you will not have this experience a second time."

"I wish you a safe journey and—and a pleasant time," she replied.

There was just the faintest tremor in her voice. He noticed it. A mist came before his eyes, and almost shut the vision of her fresh, young beauty from him. Then he cleared his throat of its sudden roughness and said:

"Thank you. Come, Jasper, we must go back. Good morning, Miss Stewart. This is fine weather we are having now, isn't it?"

"Very," she answered. "I am enjoying it immensely."

He lifted his hat and turned to re-enter the park. Jasper looked as though he did not approve of so short an interview. He stood quite still for a moment, following with his eye the figure of his quondam friend. Douglass, too, stood and watched her, but with the hopeless, longing expression of one, who, beholding a life-boat depart, is left alone upon a sinking ship. And so again these two had passed each other on life's sea.

Phillip came up that evening to take Margaret to the theatre. She was especially glad of this opportunity of being alone with him, for she was anxious to have him know what had passed between herself and Douglass since the evening when he had informed her of Douglass' real character. Although he had been up twice since, at neither time

had she felt sufficient control of herself to broach the subject.

Margaret had planned to speak of the matter on her way home, but somehow the opportune moment did not seem to come. She never knew Phillip to be so talkative, indeed he seemed to her nervously so. Whenever there was the slightest pause he appeared in feverish haste to start the conversation on once more. She attempted several times to give it a more personal turn, but with each attempt her object was defeated, and it seemed almost designedly. At last, a little piqued at his apparent indifference to a matter which she felt, considering their intimate relations, should be of interest to him, especially as he himself had been the one to give the information, she desisted in her attempts.

"I am afraid, Pearl, I shall not be able to get over very soon again," he said, as they were nearing home. "I will have lectures or work every night for some time now. I am sorry for your sake it will be so. I should like to take you out oftener: though, really, after all, I do not suppose you will suffer as far as that goes. You are a pretty popular young woman, I guess."

"I have plenty of invitations if that is what you mean. I do not accept them all, however. I do not care to go with everybody nor everywhere."

They were standing on the porch, and the light from the red lantern overhead fell upon her. Her

face had lost some of its natural rich coloring, Phillip had thought when he first saw her in the evening. He wondered if she had suffered much.

"So you are not entirely won over to your new life then; not yet a devotee at Society's shrine?"

"I thought you knew me better, Phillip," she said. "Is my nature so pliant, do you think that a few months could make me a new creature? Do you imagine that all the deepest longings of a soul could in so short a time be stifled or uprooted? This life is not for me, Phillip. It is for no one who is striving to attain. The whole atmosphere is one of insincerity. I would rather be born in the meanest home with only half a chance to develop, yet be myself. O, the shame of it! never once to act from motives absolutely true and noble; to always say and do and be that which society may approve; to sell one's self bodv and soul for wealth and position."

She placed one hand upon his arm unconsciously. He thrilled under the light pressure. A wild desire seized him to say—"Come, come, Margaret, my pearl, come to me! We will go together where nature, not art, where truth, not hypocrisy, may do their blessed work; where the Divine hand may shape as it will."

Margaret, looking into his face, saw there a strange sternness, an expression in his eye she could not understand. She leaped to the conclusion that he felt a certain incogruity between her

words and what seemed to him, when they met at social functions, pure enjoyment on her part. She would show to him, prove to him that she would act as she had spoken.

"I have made up my mind, Phillip, to go home. I am longing for the old place more and more every hour. I want to be there when spring sings her first song. I would not miss one note. I'll leave *you* to the tender mercies of the *Beechdale* sirens, Phillip."

A ripple of laughter fell from between her parted lips. This last picture was irresistibly ludicrous to her; Margaret was so wholesomely, so entirely alive, that she could readily pass from one mood to another. But such passing was no more indicative of mutability of character than the constant shifting of the anger and laughter of the sea is a denial of the changeless and eternal calm of its fathomless deeps.

"You need not waste your time in Cloverdale with those pictures," he answered, joining in with her mood. Then more seriously—"You know what I think about such things. A man, at least one who has even a sneaking notion of becoming something in this world, would not resign himself for many evenings to the tender mercies of a dozen or more frenzied mothers and silly daughters. A man will frequent such places only under three conditions: if he be a fool, a rogue, or a scribbler. I hope at least I am neither the first nor the sec-

ond, and I cannot, though I should not be averse to it, lay claim to being the third." And then they said good-night.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

HOME AGAIN.

AFTER Margaret had decided that her return was now a matter of only a week or so that at latest, her spirits rose proportionately. The depression that had kept her so relentlessly in its grasp of late seemed to be relaxing its hold. Her physical and spiritual nature were gradually readjusting themselves to the beauty and harmony of the outside world, an infallible proof of a normal condition of life.

Mrs. Lansdowne and her daughters noticed the change and said, "Margaret, you are homesick and have tried to conceal it. You are glad to leave us!" to which Margaret gave instant denial. Phillip saw it also when he came to spend the last evening with her, and strangely enough—for lovers are illogical—took the roundabout way of explaining to his jealous heart, and concluded that an understanding had been reached between his cousin and Douglass. He went home more weary and heartsore than ever, and proceeded at once to indulge in that one luxury which misery so delights in—the contemplation of wounds and the employment of probing them more deeply.

Mrs. Lansdowne was, for one reason, extremely sorry to have Margaret go. She was fearful that as yet they had not obtained sufficient hold upon Phillip to have him at their beck and call unless Margaret were the drawing influence. At the same time, however, she realized that Margaret's presence was a constant menace to her matrimonial designs, because of the more than brotherly interest which she felt Phillip had for his cousin.

"I wish you could stay a little longer, my dear," she said one day when alone with her niece. "The girls would love to have you, too. Of course we cannot make it as gay for you as we could were we not in mourning, and our little trouble, too, has had a depressing influence upon us all." Mrs. Lansdowne had now arrived at the point in her outraged feelings when she could allude to her youngest daughter's escapade as "our little trouble." Gossip had died down and society had ostracized neither herself nor her daughters in consequence.

"I feel that father would like to have me home, Aunt Frances," replied Margaret. "Remember, I am all he has. You have done everything to make my stay with you a pleasant and happy one. I truly appreciate every effort."

Mrs. Lansdowne drew her chair a little more closely. "Margaret, my dear, I have not mentioned that little matter to you since the discussion we had that dreadful morning. I have been, perhaps, too selfishly bound up in my own troubles to think of

anything else. I see by the *Herald* that Malcolm Douglass has gone South." She scanned Margaret's face intently to note the effect of her words. "Did you know it?"

"I met him one morning a few days before he went. We happened to run against each other. He told me at the time he intended taking such a trip."

"I hoped, Margaret, you would have gotten over your strongheadedness. You are very unwise, my child. Such men, when they do settle down are preferable to those who make greater pretentions. I told the girls not to allude to the subject unless you yourself did so. You are of a peculiar temperament, and they are impulsive. I dread anything like a rupture in a family."

"I did what I felt was right, Aunt Frances. I have no regrets," was the quiet, yet firm reply. And the subject was not approached again during the remainder of her stay.

The day for her departure at last arrived. Yzabel and Fletcher drove to the station with her and Phillip was down to say good-bye. Margaret's face grew radiant when she caught sight of his tall, stalwart figure among the crowd. She had been so afraid that something might detain him at the last moment, and she felt a lonesome feeling come over her at the thought of several months, perhaps more, elapsing before she should see him again. "Don't study too hard, Phillip," she said, when he kissed

her good-bye, "and remember, father and I will be expecting you for your summer vacation. There is no air like the air of Cloverdale, you know. Good-bye, Yzabel; good-bye, Feltcher!" Then came the screech of the whistle, the last wave of the hand, the majestic sweep of the long train as it flashed out into the morning sunlight.

Her eyes rested with delight on the surrounding hills and lowlands. Being country-bred, she began to count the weeks that must elapse before that soft, velvety green would, silently as the dew falls and as mysteriously, spread itself over the brown stubble and fallow ground. She saw here and there in the valleys as she passed stretches of wheat putting on a brighter tinge after their sturdy resistance to winter frosts. She remembered that the seed was being sown when she had passed on her way to Beechdale. Then she fell to thinking how long, how very long it was since she had left her simple, country home for the gilded pomp and parade of high life; of what Malcolm Douglass had said to her that first night they had met, of the glitter and splendor which seemed real, but had no substance.

She was fast slipping away to the painful past when the train slowed up and stopped. The sudden jar of the car brought her back to the present world of reality. She read on the signboard—Beaconfield. The sun was riding on toward the horizon, and a few hours more would bring her to Singleton. Then another run and home!

She looked out of the window and saw a man, tall, awkward, sun-burned, with a child hugged close to his breast asleep. A second was clinging with one hand to its father's trousers and holding a brilliant candy cane in its mouth with the other. In a moment a woman, wearing a hat bristling with as much artificial finery as she could well accomodate, physically, on one head piece, came upon the scene. She grabbed the small boy sucking his candy cane and made a wild rush for the train. The man followed her leisurely.

The incident was a typical one and representative of rustic life. Though familiarity with such sights had not yet produced in Margaret's nature total disregard for the sad reality that gave rise to them, the grotesque in the situation also appealed to her. The effect was salutary. Her spirits rose with all the resiliency of youth, and it was a face flashing with health and joy that met the expectant eye of a tall, gray-haired man who was at the station when the train stopped to accommodate its one passenger to Cloverdale.

"My Pearl, back once more," exclaimed Wayland Stewart, folding his daughter to his heart. "I am glad, unspeakably glad, to have my treasure again. The old home has been lonely without its merry mistress."

They drove home through the keen, frosty air under the bright moon and countless stars, Pearl plying her father with questions as to all that had

happened during her absence, he answering with the brief, dry Yankee wit she so enjoyed.

And what a royal welcome awaited her when she sprang from the carriage! The door was instantly thrown open by Janet—Janet, hale, hearty smiling as ever. And when the first glad greeting was over she was proudly conducted to the dining room where a feast fit for a queen was served. With Janet a welcome invariably resolved itself into a material manifestation, which in her mind was its truest interpretation.

Pearl would have loved to talk until the wee sma' hours. She had become quite used now to such indulgences. But her father, in spite of an equally strong desire on his own part, insisted upon rest soon after her return, that she might be "his own fresh, wild flower, lifting its head with the morning light."

CHAPTER XL.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

IT was not until the next evening that father and daughter found the opportunity for which they longed—a heart-to-heart talk. After tea they went to the library and sat down before the blazing wood fire.

"And so my daughter has returned, the same little country girl as she went," he said, looking fondly at her.

"You should not call me little," she replied with affected censure in her tones. "Do you realize that I am five feet six, and have reached the ripe age of twenty? As for being still a country girl, however, I must answer guilty to the charge."

"Guilty? So it is a crime then!" His eyes were fairly dancing with the delight of this *quid pro quo*; yet she felt the little sting that lay beneath the words. The blood leaped in an instant to her cheek.

"I went to prove that it was not such," she answered.

"Did you so prove it?"

"To myself, yes, without doubt, to others in a measure; but, father, I found conditions that might be stamped criminal and not belie the name."

He looked down at her in the grave, gentle manner she knew so well.

"I have been afraid, very much afraid of late, that my flower was far too sumptuous a one to be kept in this secluded spot. I thought, perhaps, it might be better for it to bloom in the larger gardens of life. Now that my flower has seen these gardens, if it yearns for them, I myself will transplant it, should it seem best. I have often felt, my daughter, during these last few years, that this home might be lonely and its pleasures very circumscribed for a young girl abounding in health and aspirations, such as you possess. I was glad when you had the opportunity of seeing what men call the broader side of life. I felt that I might trust to the training you have received to see truly and choose wisely. My greatest desire in life is that you shall have all, all that may produce in you what is noblest, truest, loftiest, best. Yet this must be chosen by you, not by me. I have tried to lead you to the land flowing with milk and honey. You must go in and possess it."

"Father, I have a few confessions to make, and one is this—I believe now, as I look back, I did wish to try my wings. I will admit that there was creeping into my soul a feeling of impatience, almost of contempt, I am afraid, for the uncouthness so often displayed around us. I began to feel for the first time a truth and justness in some of the common aspersions cast upon country folk, and at

the same time I felt—was it an unpardonable pride that caused the feeling?—that we were different from most of them. I wished Aunt Frances to see that I, though a simple country girl, unacquainted with much of her social code, might yet be not unpresentable to her high cast friends. But I had still another motive in going and this was a more worthy one. I dreamed I might, in a so-called cultured community, find the remedy for the slow, dull, apathetic people of Cloverdale." She paused.

"And did this intrepid humanitarian solve the problem?" he asked.

"She found there an enslavement far, far greater than any she could have imagined. Ambition here is killed, there it kills. The result is the same—thralldom of the human soul."

Wayland Stewart looked into his daughter's face and read there the vague, unexpressed longings of his own youth, longings that had risen long hours wrestling with the great problems of life. In those hours he had felt the schism between man and God, he had felt, too, that insatiable craving for knowledge whose realization is but a nearer approach of the soul to its creator. Something told him, however, that he was unfitted to cope with these problems in great world conflicts. His work as a reformer would have to be of the positive rather than negative sort, of the constructive, not destructive type; he would be true to himself, and he believed with the poet that the noble-

ness which in other men lay sleeping, would rise in majesty to meet his own. Peace came at last to Wayland Stewart, but thoughts are immortal and must, when once born, work out their destiny. They were now springing up in another soul to which they had been transmitted; they were appearing in this second generation with a yet more vigorous insistence to be carried to a consummation.

"And so?" he asked, with grave interest. She shook her head.

"I do not know—yet. But there is something here, father," placing her hand upon her breast, "that tells me life can never be the same inactive existence that it was before. So far, I believe my duty has consisted in being your dear companion, in soothing your loneliness, in taking mother's place. Now, with this there comes to me a yet broader work—my duty to my fellow men, to those about me. I would wake them up to the fact that incomparable beauty is all about them, that knowledge is theirs for the taking, that the pitiful horde which they catch at so greedily is worth only what it brings in exchange; that he alone is rich whose soul is free; that education is not schools, nor religion creeds; that he has neither who cannot impart both. I believe, father, that others have felt this longing that I have. Many have felt the beautiful hills and valleys, God's trysting place, to achieve; but if they succeed they do not return to

tell the glad story. Father, tell me, how is it that you clung to this life?"

"Because," he answered, "I was a child of Nature above all else. I had, too, a sweet, brave, cultured woman by my side, who felt with me that truer, nobler lives might be lived here among the gardens of the world than in the centres of vice and vanity, and that if so blessed, we might bring our children up to live theirs also; so, I think, we have! so, I think, we have!" Wayland Stewart placed his hand as if in benediction upon his daughter's head.

"Father," said the girl, quickly, as though his last words had brought to her remembrance something she intended him to share, "I have something else that I would have you know; first, because I never yet have had a secret from you, and, too, because I would have you feel how implanted in my soul has been the teachings of both my parents." He settled back in his armchair to listen. She interpreted the movement and went on.

"Do you recall, father, a Mr. Douglass, of whom I wrote?" She waited for his answer, perhaps to gain composure.

"Yes."

"From the first time I met him I admired him. We had many interests in common, which naturally drew us together. His honest satire, too, amused me and his fine intellect charmed me. Yet, after weeks of such intimacy, I believe the relationship remained only a fascination, for I was surprised be-

yond expression when suddenly at one of the dances to which he accompanied me, he gave me to understand that his attentions had, for a long time, meant far more than I dreamed they did."

"He was wealthy, one of the wealthiest men of Beechdale, and was nobly descended. He moved in a circle, which I was sure, though it received me there on equal terms, would doubtless resent my right to be there permanently. His sister I knew to be a proud, heartless woman, whose wealth and ancient lineage was to her of paramount importance. For her brother to marry an unknown and obscure country girl would be a death stroke to all her ambitions.

"I thought of all this—the awful consequences that might result from such an unequal union, unequal in the world's eyes, and to his appeals for an immediate answer, I responded that time must be given me to think.

"But I had a yet graver reason for hesitancy than those I mentioned. In the brief time I had been at Beechdale I had become aware that a man's past life was of little or no interest. There was no moral standard to which a man must attain. Compliance with social decrees was the only arbitrary demand. Wealth and position weighed equally against selfishness and vice. How could I know that this man was different from others! I felt that I was confronting a great question, which for the first time, father, you could not solve for

me. You had taught me the principles of truth, and I had now to apply them.

"I sent for Phillip in my perplexity. I told him all. I knew, father, that he had my welfare at heart as much as you." Wayland Stewart moved his position for the first time since his daughter had begun her story. He seemed as if about to speak, then changed his mind and settled back once more in the cushioned depths of his chair.

"To my horror—I think now that horror, rather than sorrow, filled my heart just then— I heard from Phillip a few words that revealed to me the real man with whom I had been associating on the most familiar terms. My mind was made up. I could hesitate no longer. I sent for him and confronted him with the miserable truth. I tried to make him understand that as a pure woman, I felt that he had humiliated me beyond measure in asking me to become his wife, a relation which in God's sight could be one in name only.

"He was utterly undone at my knowledge of his private life, and he seemed unable to comprehend its vital connection with our relations. I told him that all future intercourse beyond that which would arise from mere acquaintanceship must cease.

"We parted that night. I saw him once afterward. We met by chance on the street. He said he was about to leave with some friends for the South.

"I, too, longed to get away from it all—all the

sham, the insincerity, the meaningless calls, the dress parade that filled the hours of each day and half the night. I wanted you and the dear, dear home. Indeed, father, I was sure that you had spoiled me absolutely for ever becoming a society butterfly." She laughed, but Wayland Stewart thought he detected tears in the laughter. He feared the wound had been deeper than she herself was aware of. But it would heal in time. He knew her independent, rebounding nature too well to question that, so he only said:

"I am proud of my daughter. She has the qualities that mark true American womanhood. Thank God! I believe there are many such helping to hold up the bulwarks of a tottering civilization."

She put her fingers playfully upon his lips.

"Not another word, sir; not another word, unless you would make of me an arbitrary queen of the Clovers."

"Of such are the uncrowned queens," he said, with a rapt look upon his face. "I have been greatly blessed to have had in my home two such."

"Dear, dear mother," said the girl, lifting her eyes where her father gazed upon the portrait of the beloved dead.

And thus they sat a few sweet moments in tender silence, linked together there, the souls of the living with that of the dead.

CHAPTER XLI.

SETTLING DOWN AGAIN.

THE first days after Pearl's return seemed to pass all too quickly. She had the feeling that she had been away years, and she caught herself many times a day looking for great changes here and there. She went around through the house and grounds with all the pleasurable curiosity of one who for the first time was enjoying them. A little while, however, sufficed for the strangeness to wear away, and Pearl became little by little readjusted to her old surroundings, and with readjustment to the past came a sense of loss when any familiar object or face belonging to that past was missing.

More and more as she settled down to her accustomed habits and pursuits, she felt the loss of Phillip. She missed his handsome face and merry brown eyes at the table, and the good-natured controversies between him and her father. And she missed him even more when it was time to light the lamp in the cosy library, for how often of an evening had they three sat together reading aloud or discussing some pregnant question of the day. She called to mind, with a pang of regret, now that

it was all over, how very precious these hours had been to her.

From time to time bright, chatty letters came from Phillip, telling of his work. He hinted, too, of the possibility of his enlistment in the hospital corps if war should break out between the Spanish and the Americans. And so the weeks passed by.

Though Pearl's visit to Beechdale had not resulted in any unfavorable comparison between her own home and that of her cousins, Beechdale, with its indefinable charm and æsthetic appreciation when brought into mental juxtaposition with Cloverdale, made the latter shrink often to very small dimensions.

In her own home there had always been the spirit of innate gentleness and sincerity in comparison with which the outward suavity and the dissimulation so noticeable in the home of her relatives was as the pictured counterpart to the living, breathing form. Yet she had enjoyed the general air of good-breeding and the results of a liberal education among those whom she met. She felt the change in her situation on her return. Something which had through the years heretofore been vaguely missed, now overpowered her with the greatness of its lack. Gradually, these feelings took such possession of her as to demand intelligent interpretation. She began to realize to its full extent the gulf fixed between education and ignorance, beween culture and uncouthness, also the

loneliness of him that dwells at the farther end.

Cloverdale was not inferior, perhaps, to other settlements of the same size and advantages. It boasted three churches, one Methodist and two Baptist, and a school, beside village privileges, in the way of saloon, postoffice and general all-around store.

It might be remarked that plurality of churches did not argue over-development of piety, nor was a widespread preference for their peculiar doctrines indicated by the existence of two edifices in which some denominational beliefs were duly expounded.

The two churches of one faith were distinguished between as the heretical and the orthodox. Some-time in the misty past, none of the rising generation could tell exactly when, there had been some dispute, as to the interpretation of a certain clause in the articles of faith, no one now had any knowledge as to where the offending clause had hidden itself, though, of course, it was there, and doubtless as bristling as ever. Those who did know, had been at rest many years in the church yard, but the results of the dispute were still apparent in the two little sanctuaries which stood on either side of the road, directly opposite each other.

The split had occured long before the Stewarts had come to the West. Pearl and her father had had many a hearty laugh over the fact that the offending church, though itself so absolutely unable to state the cause of the disaffection, was still al-

luded to as the "heretic church"; and, indeed, seemed to feel a certain inflation therefrom.

The school house was a mile from where it should have been situated, if the convenience of the majority of its youthful patrons was considered, and this solitary seat of learning opened and closed as the spirit moved that august body of Cloverdale, the board. As the majority of the afore-mentioned body were farmers of Cloverdale, the spirit in this connection was nothing less tyrannical and erratic than the corps.

When Wayland Stewart's daughter, now, for the first time, began to ponder deeply upon the social, spiritual and intellectual state of Cloverdale, she felt more and more assured of the crying needs in this little corner of the earth, where destiny had placed her. Her father's attitude had been one of silent example. She believed the time had come for action.

"If I might help them to see the glory of life!" was her passionate cry. But the words beat back upon her heart with a hopeless echo. Their spiritual eyes were blinded; how could they see eternal things? They thought to find God only in churches; behold! He was in green earth, and fragrant air and crystal stream; in Him they lived and moved and had their being and knew it not. Ah! the tragedy of it. What could she do? What could she do? The answer came quite unexpectedly, from a quarter not foreseen.

She was starting one morning down the pike to call on Deacon Beverly's wife, who had been ill for months. The farm house was a mile away, and she had covered about half the distance, when she met Amanda Haines' stepson, a bright looking, sturdy little fellow of twelve. He had a lunch basket in his hand.

"Good-morning, Ben," she said, stopping; "how are you?"

"G'morin'," answered the boy, half-bashfully.

"Going to school, I suppose."

"No, 'm," he replied, emphatically, this time lifting a pair of flashing brown eyes to hers, without embarrassment.

"School does not close for a week yet, does it?" she asked.

"I ain't goin' no more, long's Hendry's teacher. I hate him!" He stamped his foot furiously on the gravel, till it sank an inch or two.

"I learnt my lesson as good as some of the others, but he got a pick on me. If anything went wrong, he licked me fur it, so I left. If I'd been bigger, I'd a thrashed him before I went! His father don't know nothin', pa says. 'Cause he went to the city school he thinks he can fly it over us—but he can't."

"I am sorry, Ben, you have had this trouble. School lasts such a short time. It seems too bad to miss a week."

"Father said he used to go only three months,"

answered the boy, sturdily, as if he had now furnished sufficient justification for his action.

"But wouldn't you like to learn a great deal more, so that you could read lots and lots of books?"

"Father kin read. He kin read as much as he wants ter. Father's goin' to war if there is one, he says. I'd like to go. I'd rather be a soldier than go to school. I'd like to be captain and have Hendry my soldier. He's a coward, and if he run I'd shoot him dead!" The boy's face looked suddenly fiendish. The cruel, hard lines around the childish mouth were so pitifully out of place.

An expression came into the girl's face beside him, an expression of shuddering repulsion mingled with unutterable pity. She seemed to look down, down into the very depths of that poor, restricted child soul, and the horror of the sight froze upon her face; then there leaped into those wonderful changing eyes of hers the ineffable tenderness like to that which lighted the face of the sinless Nazarene as he looked, centuries before, upon human ignorance and passion. Her eyes seemed to Ben to glow like fire and to swim in a midst of tears. He threw out his sun-burned hands towards her, and the basket fell to the ground.

"Don't look at me," he cried piteously. "What'd I do? What'd I do?"

She came closer to him.

"Ben, don't you know it is wrong, very wrong

to want to kill any one? Do you think it is that which makes a good soldier? Good soldiers do not slay because they delight to." Then she began to see how difficult a thing it was to make this child-mind grasp the true meaning of patriotism. To him it meant an opportunity to slay an enemy. That was all.

She began again. "If we should have war, the people of this country will be compelled to fight because some of God's people, away in another country, are being imprisoned and starved and treated in a most cruel way. We must make them stop their cruelty. Do you think, Ben, if you could kill Mr. Hendry, you would then be a good soldier? A soldier should be brave and true; he should always think of other's wrongs, not his own."

The child ventured to look at her once more. This time his eyes were filled with a strange awe and reverence, a vague subconscious questioning. He stooped suddenly to pick up his basket.

"Ben," asked the girl, "would you like to come to my house every morning, and let me be vour teacher?"

She was not prepared for the prompt reply.

"You bet I would! Could I have a Fourth reader, like Sam Spence's. He'll sell his for thirty cents."

"You need not bring any books at first, Ben. We will have a different way of keeping school. I

will talk and you will listen. Would you like that?"

The boy nodded his head and laughed—a happy sound it was—and started on his way across the field. He looked back once and shouted through his hands: "I'll be there, sure." Then she lost sight of his little fleeing figure.

When Pearl returned from her call on the deacon's wife she was happier than she had been for days. The strange, indefinable longings to do something for those about her—to help them to catch a glimpse of the beauties which she saw, and to hear at least a few of the wonderful harmonies which she heard—were gradually shaping themselves into practical conceptions. As all hypersensitive, quickly responsive natures are, Pearl Stewart was an idealist and therefore a castle builder. Ten minutes had hardly elapsed after her interview with Ben before she saw in her mind's eye that which would take years if not generations to accomplish, but she had seen the vision and henceforth through her whole life it would be her guiding star.

That evening as she and her father were together, Pearl turned to him in her impulsive way and said:

"Father, I want to talk with you!"

"I shall be glad, very glad, to listen," he replied.

"I want to begin by asking questions."

"A most womanly desire, my daughter; now begin your catechism."

"Father, do you not think that soul blindness

and soul deafness are the most terrible of all afflictions? Do you understand? Do I express my idea clearly? Do you believe that?" The multiplicity of questions indicated to him her tensely wrought condition.

"I do believe it!" he said, firmly.

"I suffer because it is so. Is that strange or as it ought to be?" she asked, earnestly.

"It is as it should be, yet—" he laid his hand lovingly on her head— "yet I am selfish. I would not have you suffer."

"It is because I *suffer* that I will attain. It is God's way," came the quick response. "I must offer the world an equivalent for what I have received. I *must*, I *must*!"

"You are right; the universe will demand to the utmost farthing. It is an absolute but just master. Correlation of forces is its supreme law." He looked at her fixedly a moment. "But how would you repay?" he asked, profoundly interested in this young, independent thinker.

"By telling others the story of life that has come to me—imperfectly, perhaps, but it has come."

Wayland Stewart looked at his daughter in a puzzled way. It was just a little hard for him to comprehend her. It was an impossibility for him to anticipate her.

"You would never guess my plan, dear, so you need not try," she said, playfully. "It is this—just now. I simply want a chance to talk. I would

like permission from that austere board to conduct a night school for—let us say, two months."

"And who is to be the teacher?" he asked, smiling.

"I am, and you are to assist when you have the time. I want pay for my services, but the money will go to buy books and magazines for the coming winter. I want it to be under the auspices of the board to give it *eclat.* See?" She looked pleadingly into his kindly gray eyes.

Wayland Stewart had great faith in his daughter's schemes, but he had to confess that this one quite took away his breath. Yet he did not have the heart to dash her hopes.

"Your assistant will do what he can," he replied, with a twinkle in his gray eye.

"Thank you! That is all for tonight." She took up a book which lay open on his knee.

"Now, let us talk with Mr. Kipling, please."

CHAPTER XLII.

DAYS OF PEACE.

THEY were halcyon days for Pearl, those days of early spring. Nothing seemed to daunt her spirit. Even when her father told her that he received little encouragement from the board for the contemplated summer school, she went on planning just the same as if the idea of defeat had no place in her calculations.

"Well," she answered, brightly, after he had announced the results of the meeting, "if they think they are too poor for the luxuries of education, we will have to bring them to a better understanding of themselves and their resources. You and I, father, will pay for the experiment, that is all. We will try to show them that the value of money is only in its power to purchase that which will aid in the betterment of life, that will give us a higher standard of living. My task is very clear to me. I must do my little part in elevating the character of the wants of those about me.

Wayland Stewart was quite willing to let his daughter follow the dictates of youthful enthusiasm, and, not only this, but he determined to aid

her in every way possible. So, within a fortnight, the white school house was opened and Pearl made it as attractive as she could. Pictures hung on the walls, flowers in plenty were piled high upon the desk and a scarlet rug covered the bare platform. Six came the first evening. Afterward the numbers increased, and among those present were several of the young men and girls who long ago had laid aside their books for the sterner duties of life.

And in the first joy of her undertaking her heart turned instinctively to Phillip as the only one beside her father who could understand the great moving force within that was impelling her on—on—on! She sat down one evening after her return from the school and wrote him. The letter was a sort of safety valve for her highly-wrought feelings.

"Dear Phillip: Not if you were to guess forever would you have even the very faintest idea as to the latest adventure of your country cousin. Shall I let you guess, just to give you some mental exercise, or shall I break the suspense and tell you at once? Well, you know my naturally hard-hearted procedure in such matters, and this time I will break my record and—break the news. I am a school 'marm'—absolutely; a real, live school 'marm.' And now to explain the enigma.

"It is just this: I want to try at least to awaken some of the people of Cloverdale out of their sleep—to have them see what a glorious, glorious world

they are living in. Now, Phillip, don't be afraid that I am going to proclaim myself a twentieth century crusader, and cry aloud in the streets, for I am going to do nothing of the sort. I am only going to give out what has been given me, and in a way all my own.

"I have asked myself hundreds of times these burning questions; why is it that we are willing to resign ourselves to the poorest educational advantages, ignorant preachers, worst of doctors—in short, the cast-off talent of every kind? Why are we willing to remain in the same weary, old groove of life indefinitely?

"What is needed, Phillip, is aspiration, a longing for something beside additional acres. But how can this great end be accomplished, if every one who has, by some good fortune, attained this better understanding, spreads his wings of aspiration and soars away, never to return?

"You were fearful, Phillip, (now, don't deny it) and so was father that I would never be quite satisfied again in my narrow sphere. My narrow sphere! Why it is wide as the universe. I feel rather, that I was imprisoned during those months at Beechdale. What a long letter I have written, and I have not told nearly all I meant to. But I must leave a little untold, so we can have some of those old talks togther when you come home. Then you shall know all, just how I mean to work

out the problem of, yes, *my* salvation. It must be so. Your devoted cousin,

"MARGARET."

The April days flew by on golden wings. The school still kept its doors open, and one day Farmer Fortney came to Wayland Stewart and said:

"You and your daughter are doing a good work. My Frank and Lettie never took so much interest in book learning before. They're beginning to think quite smart about education. It's more what a school ought to be than any ever I knew. I never had much education myself, but I allow if I had, I would be better off—a better farmer, perhaps. And, say, I want to give you a little something beside talk. We all ought to have a pride in this thing. It is keeping some of our boys from the village saloon. I 'lowed to Farmer Perry the other night that a 'libery' would be a right smart improvement here."

"Isn't it just splendid?" cried Pearl when her father repeated verbatim Mr. Fortney's conversation, and then she flung her arms about her father's neck and kissed him as frantically as though he had been the actual donor, instead of the bearer of a gift.

"It isn't so much the money as it is that we seem to be waking up to our privileges," she exclaimed.

This happened at noon, and in the afternoon, still full of the happy plans for the future, she took a book and went out to sit a while under the newly

garbed trees, to read and to breathe in the throbbing life of a spring day. Songsters of the woodland choir flew back and forth, whistling to each other. The fresh breezes fanned her cheeks. A book of poems lay in her lap. She turned the leaves aimlessly.

"I cannot read," she murmured. "All that is written in the book is here, here around me." Then a fragrant zephyr, more venturesome than the others, swept over the open volume and disclosed a letter hidden in its leaves. She knew the writing. "One of Phillip's letters," she said, and instantly took it up.

Phillip's letters were common property of Pearl and her father. It made no difference to which one they were directed. She supposed either her father or she had been reading it, and had carelessly left it in the book. She loved to go over Phillip's letters. They were always so chatty, so full of interest. She did not even turn the letter, but began to read on the page open before her. She went a few lines and then stopped short. She stared at the words with wide open eyes. All her nonchalance vanished instantly. Could this really be Phillip's letter! She turned to the opposite page and read the signature:

"Your devoted nephew,
"PHILLIP VALE."

Then she re-read the words that had so strangely caught her eye.

"My Dear Uncle, I know that your greatest desire, as you told me before I came away, was that Pearl and I might some day be united in marriage. I have told you that I love her more than my life, and—paradoxical as this may seem, it is for this reason that I give her up. She cares for me only as a brother. I am now *sure* of this; before I only feared it to be so. For my sake, never even hint to her of your wish in the matter, or of my real feeling toward her. *God* makes marriages, not man."

She sat, as if fascinated by the words before her. She felt as one might if given suddenly the power to look within another's heart and to read there its inmost secrets.

"Phillip loves me! Loves me! and I have never dreamed it. Ah! Phillip, my brother is dead." A suspicious quiver played upon her lips, a suspicious sparkle gleamed upon her lashes.

To her, Phillip had been all that the word "brother" could imply; he had been her companion, her sympathizer, her guide. Now old things had passed away, and behold, all had become new. In one brief span of time the old tie had been dissolved and another had taken its place. The old relations could never again exist, for the attitude had changed.

A strange feeling of loneliness crept over her. Could she meet him ever again with the same joyous freedom, the warm impulsive kiss of old? She

told herself "never, never again." She shrank, too, from the very idea of acquainting her father with her discovery, and she wondered at the feeling, for she called to mind no such recoil when telling him of Douglass' affection for her.

Whether the letter had been written before or since her return, she concluded it had been thoughtlessly left in the volume. The book was one which her father, as well as she, often read, and sooner or later he would find the letter. She would try to put the incident from her mind, as she was putting the letter from her view.

She took the book into the house and placed it back upon the shelf. But Pearl was one strangely and deeply affected by even the little incidents in life. Every event, however trivial, it seemed, was to her but another link forged into the chain of destiny. She raised her eyes involuntarily to the book holding somewhere within its silent pages the great heart secret of a young life, and her soul bowed before it, as it bowed before the revelation of the great mysteries of life. She felt it the greatest honor that could be besowed upon a woman—this love of a true man, and the one crown which a woman wears, than which there is no richer.

CHAPTER XLIII.

TROUBLESOME THOUGHTS.

IF it were possible to tuck away troublesome thoughts in a secluded nook of the brain, that they might not come out to harass us so perpetually, how much happier, concceivably, all of us would be. As persistently, however, as Pearl tried to banish the idea of the newly discovered relations between herself and Phillip, just so persistently did it spring out of its hiding place to disquiet her. If she went to the library, though, on entering her mind was intent on other things, like a phantom the fatal letter would glide before her mental vision. By and by, instead of seeming to see the written sheet, she began to hear the words as if uttered by Phillip's own voice, at her side, and the voice pained her, for it was always sad and hopeless to her ear.

One morning, disturbed more than usual by these fancies, she went out to take her customary walk. Almost aimlessly she took her way through the meadow. She stopped where towered a mighty oak—her father's pride and her own admiration. It had doubtless made a sheltered home for its feathered inhabitors during a century or

more. One bright plumaged bird sat all alone upon a branch above her head. It gave a long, low plaintive note, as if calling for its companion. Pearl listened for the answering trill. None came. The little songster sent forth a longer, more urgent call; again, and yet again it was repeated. She felt suddenly as if she knew the yearning in its tiny breast—its disappointment. So natural is it for us to interpret all nature by our own heart beat. She tried to laugh at herself for so romancing and walked on more briskly, but birds and winds and perfumed air seemed to whisper, "Phillip," to her listening ear.

She had not been a woman if the knowledge of Phillip's love for her, a love so pure and true, did not administer a little to her sense of pride; yet she was not less a woman for the fact. She shrank intuitively from the thought that she had once been so near offering up the holy and pure affection of her heart upon an altar drenched in polluted and forbidden oblations. The humiliation she suffered in consequence was, in a measure, lessened by the knowledge of Phillip's noble, unselfish affection for her. His character had never stood out in such grand, incomparable proportions as it did now against the black background of the experiences during those months at Beechdale.

A nature less responsive to every subtle influence would not have been touched so mightily, perhaps, by simple contrasts. Some can look upon

deformities with perfect equanimity, others have the very depths of their being stirred, and are changed forever. When Pearl returned to her home that morning she was not quite the same girl as when, a few hours before, she had strolled from its doors. A bird's thrill had been the delicate instrument in Nature's hand to stir within her breast the first soft harmonies that lay there ready for the master hand of Love.

The days passed on, the sweet, impetuous and changeful April days when all the earth lies smiling in her resurrection beauty. Then suddenly, one morning, amid the peace, the beauty and the joy, came a sound that sent a thrill of horror through the land. Woman turned pale and felt, as it were, the shadow of death falling across their doorways, and the young lover, with a strange pain tugging at his heart, thought of her whom he hoped to make his wife one day, and with a stifled sob, prayed for strength, strength!

But these were the sights for angels to see and to drop a pitying tear.

To human eyes it was quite otherwise. The land had gone mad for joy. The Stars and Stripes flaunted its gorgeous folds to the breeze. The bells of every city, town and village rang out their exultant notes. The passionate indignation that had been smouldering for months in the hearts of seventy millions of people, became strangely and suddenly transmitted into an emotion that found

outward expresssion in a delirium of shouts that rent the quivering air. The news that justice was at last to grapple with tyranny flashed from sea to sea and from lakes to welcoming gulf.

The word reached Cloverdale a little after noon. Pearl had waited in vain for her pupil, who, up to this day, had faithfully kept his part of the compact between them, by coming to her every morning. Toward noon she went to the village for mail, and found Ben and his father outside the postoffice, awaiting news from Singleton.

The child, with several others, was perched on a row of empty kegs. Ben was tooting away on a rather banged tin horn and knocking his bare brown legs against the keg to keep time with the music.

"I looked for you a long while, this morning, Ben," said Pearl, smiling at him.

"I would have came, but I wanted to go with father to hear about the war." He waited for her reply with an air of defiance, as if trying to prepare himself to meet any reprimand on her part.

"Ben, you should say, 'I would have come.' Don't you remember? I don't want my pupil to forget his lessons."

She put her hand under his chin and lifted his face playfully to hers. Not one word of anger from her lips! Hendry would have thrashed him, he thought.

"I'll try to remember," he answered, humbly, let-

ting the tin horn fall in a quite unmilitary fashion at his side. "I'll come tomorrow, sure. I say—you're not mad, are you?"

"Of course, I am not, Ben. I missed you, because we have such pleasant times together, that is all."

Then they smiled at each other—the girl and the child—as if they thoroughly understood. Pearl turned to go to the postoffice. Ben slid down from his keg and stood before her.

"Let me run in and get your letter, won't you?"

Pearl recognized the child's desire to show his gratefulness to her for not reprimanding him. Perhaps, too, there was a dawning sense of his own injustice in harboring such a thought against her. She felt a thousand times repaid for all the weeks of patient plodding to find in his heart this evidence of sweetness. Ben was not winsome by nature.

"All right, Ben!" she answered, "and here are two letters I wish mailed. Thank you."

As she stood waiting there was a commotion within the store, and then she heard the sonorous tones of Bud Haines. "War's declared. The President's signed at last! I hope I'll have a chance to knock a few of those Spanish devils out!" She saw Ben, his eyes ablaze with excitement, take his battered tin horn and rush down the wooden steps at the heels of a tall, brawny farmer, who leaped on his horse and clattered down the road to the near-

est church, there to ring out the news as far as bells would carry it.

Ben was so excited that he had forgotten to ask for the mail. The storekeeper came out and held up two letters and nodded toward Pearl. She made her way through the knot of excited, gesticulating loungers.

There was an air of general all-around satisfaction on their faces, as though the news just received were tidings of some, long anticipated good fortune, instead of the deathknell to thousands. It was natural, she knew, this overpowering demonstration. There seemed to be so absolutely lacking all comprehension of the pain, the agony that must surely follow. But the women would comprehend, God pity them. Of that she had no doubt.

Busied with such thoughts she had almost forgotten the letters she held. Now she examined them more closely as she went back toward home. One was for her father, the other was from New York and addressed to herself.

She had no friend there of whom she knew. She turned the letter over and over, curiously, in her hand. There is a certain fascination to most people in delaying the gratification of one's own curiosity. As she looked at it a peculiarity in the writing, the shaded down stroke of the letters and the heavy cross line of the t's sent an uncomfortable idea through her brain. She dallied no longer, but tore

it open. She turned the sheets over to find the signature. She had been correct in her conjecture. At the close of the second page, written in bold, firm hand, was the name—Malcolm Douglass. Her heart gave a sickening throb.

She had tried so persistently to push from her all the bitter memories of those last weeks at Beechdale and they had receded farther and farther into the recesses of the past. It was now only very seldom that she caught herself giving free reins to such forbidden thoughts. Yet at this moment they bore down upon her with irresistible power—all the varying and conflicting emotions of those days—the happiness which had been half pain; the pride which had been half humiliation; the anger which had been half pity. So little, after all, does the fancied control of ourselves amount to!

Trembling in every limb she sat down by the roadside. How had he dared to address her, she asked herself, angrily, after all that had passed between them. Why, why had she ever opened the letter? She reproached herself for her stupidity.

After the first few moments of passionate outbreak, however, she began to think. Her innate sense of justice came to the rescue. She felt that she had jumped to certain conclusions and perhaps without any warrant. Her surmise of its contents might be entirely incorrect. She should, at least, give to him the benefit of the doubt until she had

proved the contrary. With cold, nervous fingers she opened the letter a second time and read:

"My Friend:

"Pardon me if I take a liberty when I venture to call you friend. You said once (perhaps, you may remember) that I might consider you so. You will be surprised, it may be indignant, at my presumption in addressing you after what has passed between us. But something impels me to it, as if this were the last time it would be in my power to do so.

"I have joined the Rough Riders, which accounts for my presence in this city. If war is declared, except for an indefinable, yet ever-present sadness that mingled with the sweet calm of the country-side as it did with the stir of the crowded mart, which now seems inevitable, I go at once to be in the thick of the fray. No, as you once told me, I have not lived for you nor for any other true, pure woman; now all that remains is to die for you and for my country. Family pride is still the ruling force of my destiny. If it were not for that I would, long before this, have rid the world of my unworthy self.

"I confess that in some respects I am a coward (I would have repudiated such a charge once), for I feel no longer able to contemplate the wreck which I have made of life, nor to look on the goal that I failed to reach. Better, yes, a thousand times better, never to have been given the fleeting vision

of Elysian fields unless there is also the power to forget that we beheld them!

"I think I may, at least, be a good fighter, for danger will be sweet to me, and one careless of death will never give his back to the foe. Someone must die. I will take care that it shall not be the other fellow. I feel this my only chance yet remaining to honor my family, to serve my country and to partially wipe out the insult I offered to the only true and noble woman I ever met. Perhaps (if fate is kind to me) the soldier dying under a tropic sun will not appear quite so infamous in your memory as the presumptuous aristocrat who dared to offer you his black and craven heart. Do not be afraid that I will take the liberty of addressing you the second time. I shall not repeat the offense. Of that rest assured.

"And now God bless you, and may some one, good and true and noble as yourself, win the love of which I was not worthy.

"Sincerely,

"MALCOLM DOUGLASS."

Park Hotel, New York.

She put the letter back in its envelope, but not angrily. She could only feel a great pity for the man who had so shipwrecked life and who even now had such distorted views of things that he deemed reckless fighting under the Stars and Stripes an undisputed honor to family name; and

death under an alien sky for the love of a woman, true patriotism.

She rose from her seat. As she did the wild, discordant scream of a child's voice fell on the quiet air. Ben was the transgressor. He was tearing toward home. He had his tin horn still held tightly in his hand, and at intervals he sent forth a loud note or two from its rusty throat. He caught sight of Pearl and stopped a moment.

"Father's goin' to war," he shouted joyously. "He says he'll send us lots of money and I'm goin' to buy a real soldier cap and have brass buttons on my new coat."

Then he dashed on past her to tell mother.

CHAPTER XLIV.

REALIZING.

PEARL made the most of the intense interest in national affairs, an interest which burned as brightly in the hearts of the youth of Cloverdale as it did in the breasts of those nearer the great palpitating centers of activity. She persuaded her father to give some talks on American History, and made the reading-tables bright with the illustrated magazines and papers she had procured.

It was marvelous how many subjects put on new life when presented in connection with the vital and absorbing question of the time. The attendance at their evening circles began to increase rather than to diminish.

Farmer Brunt, one of the members of that most skeptical board, lifted Pearl to the topmost pinnacle of joy by exclaiming one day:

"I declare, your scheme is working better than I 'lowed it would. Can't keep our Rob away. I won't begrudge giving you a spec when you need it. W'll have to have better teaching here next winter, even if it takes a bit more."

Pearl was so absorbed by her work that she

hardly realized how long a time had elapsed since they had heard from Phillip, though thoughts of him were very often with her. One day, however, the mail brought a letter from him. He said nothing of his arrangements for the summer or even expressed a hope that he would be with them. She noticed the omission, and so did her father. But each assigned different reasons for the failure. Pearl felt sure that, as matters stood between them, he had decided not to return where reminders of old pleasures might give only present pain. Wayland Stewart reasoned otherwise. "I wonder whether that boy has taken it into his head to summer under a torrid sky instead of in the cooling shades of Cloverdale?" he remarked.

"Phillip go to war? Why father!" exclaimed the girl, "he will not graduate until May, you know."

A sickening feeling of approaching disaster came over her. The hand resting on the arm of her father's chair trembled slightly. She wondered just what reason he had for surmising that Phillip would volunteer. Knowing as he did of the shadow that rested on Phillip's heart had he come to the conclusion that sorrow would be the impelling power toward such an act? She resented the fact that such a suspicion should be cast upon him. She could not endure to think that Phillip would ever act except from principle. He was not a coward, she told herself; not one to refuse to work out his life's destiny because of a single disappointment,

however bitter. Yet the very energy with which she repudiated any unworthy motive to him seemed to bring into existence counter-thoughts, and she ended by harboring the suspicion which she had so vainly disclaimed to herself a few moments before.

In Cloverdale the days came and went much as other April days had come and gone before them Too many farewells were being said during these days not to leave the air heavy with the weight of woe.

Pearl sent in answer to Phillip's letter one of her own characteristic replies, expressing the hope that he would be with them soon.

"Do you remember, Phillip," she wrote toward the close, "those dear, old, shady woods back of the wheat field? They are so beautiful this spring! I believe they have never been so enchanting before—and the blue-bells have been so thick! You made a wreath of them last year and crowned me queen. You might have crowned a million queens this time. What fun we had that day!

"The April rains have filled the brook until it seems a river; and the stepping stones you threw in to see if I would dare to leap across are covered up."

She knew with feminine intuition that it was such allusions to the past that would touch the very heart strings of the man who read them. It was a pen picture of herself she had given, though so ingeniously done that at first the glory of the woods and

frolic of the brook seemed the all-important features in the sketch.

She waited almost a week in pleasurable excitement, and then her trips to the village began to grow less frequent, as day after day passed and no letter came. She felt mortified at the thought that her little device had not succeeded. She was haunted, too, by the fear that Phillip had seen through her innocent subterfuge.

One bright morning she concluded to see what a mad gallop over the country would do to lessen her unrest. For the first time since teaching Ben the work had seemed to drag. The sound of his voice reciting the multiplication tables seemed to come from a region far beyond the limits of the room where they had been sitting. She was relieved when the lessons were over, and inside of fifteen minutes she stepped into her riding habit, had saddled Dolly and was off.

She was tempted sorely to go to the village to see whether a letter might not have come for her this morning. Even Dolly turned her head in that direction, as if divining her mistress' thoughts.

"No, no, Dolly, not to the village," she said, with a little determined look on her face. "If he does not wish to write we'll not trouble ourselves to call for letters that aren't there." Dolly responded to the gentle pull of the rein and turned in the opposite direction.

The day was so fine she concluded to go to

Bridgeport, a distance of four or five miles, to visit a friend. She had told Janet that such might be her destination.

It was late in the afternoon when Dolly, with her mistress walking beside her, came slowly up the pike toward home. The girl's cheeks were as red as the bit of scarlet ribbon at her throat. She had taken off her hat and had hung it over one horn of the saddle; the hand that rested on the bridle was holding a hugh bunch of blue-bells. The afternoon sun glinted on her glorious hair. Every movement of the erect young figure was one of unconscious grace. She was the realization of the poet's rustic, nut-brown maid; at least so though a young man concealed behind some wayside bushes just beyond the gate.

The watcher raised himself and peered through the green foliage. When she reached the gate she halted.

"We'll stop here a moment, Doll. I believe I'm tired. Poor Doll! eat some grass. Home fodder is always best, isn't it? I'll fix my flowers together."

She sat down on a huge boulder that guarded the gateway, and as she worked sang snatches of a song—one which she and Phillip used often to try together. A low whistle came softly in to accompany her. She stopped and looked around her curiously; then she started up the strain once more. Again came the clear, low whistle—this time a little

stronger. It seemed quite near to her. She jumped up from her seat.

"There must be spirits around, Doll," she laughed. Then her eyes caught a movement behind the bushes. She started toward them. A tall young man sprang up and confronted her.

"Phillip!" she exclaimed in half-glad, half-startled tones, and let her flowers fall in one blue tangled mass about her.

He caught her hand and pulled her toward him, then kissed her on one soft, flaming cheek.

"Phillip, how you frightened me! I thought it was one of the neighbors, truly." She tried to cover her confusion by stooping to gather up her flowers.

He looked at her keenly.

"You don't seem half glad to see me!" he said in a disappointed way. "The fall of those blue-bells is of much more interest." She looked up into his face with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Jealous!" she cried. "Who would have thought it? Jealous of some innocent flowers! I've picked them and do you want me to be so cruel as to leave them there to die?"

"No," he said, stooping down to help her. "Poor things!"

"Phillip, you haven't once asked me whether I am not surprised to see you. I am; quite as much as if you had dropped from the sky. Did they give you a ticket o' leave? You have not graduated

without sending us cards, surely. What is the matter?"

"Guess!"

"I'll guess going up to the house. I want to put my flowers in water. Come, Doll, you've had enough." She felt herself growing nervous, and a strange foreboding of coming evil pressed upon her.

"Let's have the guessing now," he urged, taking Dolly by the bridle. "You never were good at solving riddles, Pearl."

She stopped suddenly in front of him. "I'll tell you. You have the war fever and have come home to say good-bye." It was a random shot. Her father's words had been her only cue. A smile was still parting her lips when his answer came.

"That's pretty good for the first trial. Yes, I am going to Cuba, but I am hardly willing to say I have the fever. I know most people call it so. Fevers are not to be relied upon, you know."

"Yes, I am going to Cuba." The words fell upon her ear like the boom of a cannon and then began to echo and re-echo through her brain. The blue-bells seemed to fall withered in her hands. Phillip was looking straight into her eyes. Was it an hour since he had spoken? It seemed so. If she could only say something! What would he think! She made a supreme effort.

"How handsome you'll look in your uniform, Phillip!"

A disappointed look passed over his face, but she did not see it.

"I came home because of that letter of yours," he said, ignoring her last remark. "Good-byes are not the most cheerful of duties we perform. I had about concluded to say my farewell in writing, but —" He turned away from her to pat Dolly's arching neck.

"But what?"

"I thought I'd like to see how nearly correct you were in details. I wish you could paint as well as you can write. I should give you an order."

She shook her head. "My talents do not lie in that direction, Phillip. Ah, there comes father. How surprised he will be! I will be out again in a moment. I must change my riding skirt."

She ran up the steps. Then he turned to await his uncle.

CHAPTER XLV.

SOLDIER PHILLIP'S VISIT.

THE time glided quickly and happily away at the Clovers. Phillip had much to tell that was of interest to his uncle and cousin. He had, too, spent the evening with Mrs. Lansdowne and her daughters the day before he started for Cloverdale, and he had brought a little budget of news about the Beechdale "set" that made Pearl feel as though she were slipping, now and then, back into the past.

"It is so strange, my feeling in regard to my visit there," she remarked when she and Phillip were sitting together in the library one afternoon. "When you tell about the people it seems impossible that I was ever a part of that butterfly existence. If you should insist that I had been there only in a dream, I think I should actually begin to believe you."

"Perhaps it was only your astral body that sojourned there, after all. Would that theory simplify matters?" he asked.

"Father would not think so. He was terribly homesick for his daughter, Phillip. It was selfish in me to leave him so long."

"O, some day he will have to spare you longer

than that," he returned with an assurance as great as if he were stating a fact quite beyond dispute.

She raised her eyes, inquiringly.

"Most girls, sooner or later, have the opportunity of setting up an establishment of their own," he supplemented. He was stretched out lazily in a Morris chair. The eyes looking into hers had a careless, good-natured smile in them.

In spite of his avowal in the letter she had found, in spite, too, of the pleasing knowledge that he had been drawn back to Cloverdale almost against his will, she began to question in her mind whether he really cared for her as much as she had fancied. The bare possibility that he did not seemed somehow to cause a blank in her life. The assurance that Phillip loved her had grown, almost unconsciously, to be a cherished day-dream. That she might have been inaccurate in her first judgments was an embarrassing confession to make even to herself. She answered him, therefore, with almost exaggerated carelessness in her tones.

"That will be quite different, you know; that will be the inevitable. One can easily resign one's self to the inevitable, don't you think so?"

"The inevitable when it once confronts us is an easy conqueror."

A sudden silence fell between them. Silences are not always golden. They have a strange power of interpreting heartbeats when we would not.

"Are Fletcher and Yzabel as much in love as ever?" she broke in irrelevantly.

"More so, I should judge. Yzabel has another ring—that is a larger set. The ring that Mr. Boskin gave Miss Wilby was a little finer, I believe, than Yzabel's. Fletcher, model lover, could not endure Yzabel's discomfiture, and Yzabel is still heaping endearments on his head."

The embarrassment of a few moments before vanished entirely in the united laugh that followed. She felt quite equal now to asking him a question that had been upon her lips a dozen times since his return. She concluded to make the venture.

"What has made you rush into this war, Phillip? Why not stay here and rest up during the summer and help me in my plans?"

"What a question for my patriotic cousin to ask. My country is in need of men. Is not that sufficient reason?"

"How do you know your country needs *you*? It does not need everybody," she persisted.

"I have no home—no family to leave. I have good health and perhaps a little skill that could not be put to better use than in relieving the sufferings of the brave fellows who go into the thick of the fray. It is a glorious cause. The world has never seen the like."

Her face reflected for a moment the light of exaltation shining in his.

"I knew," she began, then stopped confusedly

and looked at him. The rapt expression was still upon his face; he did not seem to have heard her.

"When must you leave, Phillip?" she asked, slowly. He heard this time.

"Don't let us talk about that now. I will go as I came—suddenly."

He looked out of the window as if something interested him there.

"Say, Pearl, suppose we go out and take a stroll around the farm. The sun will be going down soon. I want to have a perfect picture of it all in my mind so I may wander back in my dreams."

"Or in your astral body," she suggested.

"I wouldn't mind," he answered, amusedly, enjoying the little allusion to his own remark.

Then they went out together to visit the old, familiar places.

To the east and just across the ravine, a precipitous hill arose. Its sloping sides were carpeted in the tender green of early summer. It was the finest site in all the countryside, and Pearl and Phillip had often climbed it together to watch the sun creep down into its crimson bed.

"Are you tired, Phillip?" she asked.

"Not a bit—why?" Do I look so?"

"O, no; I wasn't calling you to order. I just wondered if you would care to make the top of the hill."

"How strange!" he said, "I was just looking over there and thinking at the moment how I would en-

joy taking one of our old-time runs. Shall we try it?"

They started off as gayly as two children. Once across the ravine, they began the ascent.

"We will both start right here, Phillip," suggested his companion. "Let us see who will reach the goal first."

They sprang forward at the appointed signal, and leaping, scrambling, falling, they reached the tree together.

"Another proof of the equality of man and woman," she cried, triumphanty. They both dropped, panting and laughing on the ground.

For awhile they sat quite still and watched the great flaming ball in the sky sink lower and lower until at last nothing but its blazing, crimson pathway marked where it had been.

"What a glorious place this world would be," said Phillip, earnestly, "if every one who went into that mysterious beyond left after him the brilliant after-glow of a noble work all nobly done."

"Phillip, how many men do you suppose will go into this war moved only by the highest incentives? It is a noble work—will it be nobly done? I heard not long ago of a man who desired to go because he had been refused by the woman whom he loved. He imagines he is serving his country. Do you think he is?"

"It depends," he answered. "If the woman refused him because he was not worthy of her, I

should say neither could he be worthy of his country. The true patriot is the true lover."

His answer startled her. She wondered if he could have guessed of whom she spoke. She felt it wiser to turn the conversation.

"Well, I know that you are a true patriot," she exclaimed, warmth and admiration in her voice.

"That remains to be proved; I have not been tried very severely yet."

"What would try you?" she asked.

"We are not apt in foretelling our temptations. They generally come from some unexpected quarter."

She picked some tiny flowers beside her and examined their mechanism, while she went on talking.

"Suppose, Phillip—you know I love to suppose—that you had fallen in love with some one during your year at Leyton; suppose, too, she cared for you; that you might have a happy life together. Would you risk all this happiness by entrusting it to the uncertain kindnesses of war?"

"A true woman is a noble patriot. She would rise above her own selfish love. She would make it easier for him to go—not harder—if the call should come. Say I had fallen in love during my stay at Leyton (will admit the hypothesis for the sake of argument) I should still have come to Cloverdale to have you wish me *bon voyage* on a southern sea."

"Phillip," she exclaimed, impetuously. "You are

one of God's noblemen!" She leaned over and placed one soft, warm hand on his. His heart throbbed fiercely at the touch. The whole flood of his passionate love that had been under control so long threatened to break its bounds. He closed his eyes for a moment to shut out the sight of her so perilously near. These unaffected words of appreciation were dangerously sweet, and he tried to beat in upon his intoxicated senses the truth that they were prompted by a loyal, sisterly affection. He fought desperately for self-control lest he should say or do that which he had vowed he never would. But the girl sitting beside him saw only a flushed, half-averted face. "Phillip, you bashful fellow. Actually blushing because I gave you a scintilla of the just appreciation which you deserve."

He had been wondering how he might explain his discomposure which he was sure was visible. She offered him, unwittingly, a way of escape. He took immediate advantage of it.

"I'm not used to being complimented by such women as you," he answered with rather an awkward attempt at gallantry.

"Shame, Phillip, shame! Paying me back in my own coin. Well, we're even and so we would better go, I think. What time is it?"

"Nearly six; supper time past."

"And Janet was going to make some Johnny cakes especially for you! She'll be overwhelmed with regrets if you should not get there when they

are piping hot. Come, I wonder how soon we can make it?"

They stood still a moment and glanced at the rose gleam in the west.

"Evening red and morning grey sets the traveller on his way," repeated the girl. "It will be a bright day tomorrow, won't it, Phillip? Signs and crops never fail in the country."

"One wouldn't think so, the way they are trusted," he answered, smiling.

CHAPTER XLVI.

OFF FOR SAN JUAN.

AS Pearl was coming down to her breakfast the next morning she heard her father giving directions in regard to some fine fruit trees that he had set out the previous fall. She thought she recognized Phillip's step on the porch.

"O, Phillip," she called, as she entered the dining-room, "we have not been to the new orchard. How stupid! The trees are so beautiful. Let us go this morning. Where's Phillip?" she inquired, as her father came in.

He took out his watch and looked at it. "Six-thirty!" he said, reflectively, and still regarding the time-piece in his hand. "I presume he is nearly to Falston now." He looked at her.

"Gone? Phillip gone?" Her voice showed she was wounded, deeply wounded.

"Did you know last night he was going?" she asked, reproachfully.

"Not until after you had retired. He told me then. He gave good-night and good-bye together. I did not see him again. John said he went a little before five. He left good-bye for you, Pearl. He did not want to pain you by saying farewell and

thought it best for you to remember the happy day and evening you had together."

"Was he afraid that I would not be able to preserve my equanimity?" There was just a tinge of anger apparent in her voice. "Men do not like scenes, I know, but I have never given him reason to fear for me."

"Not at all, not at all, daughter. You wrong him. He acted so only out of kindness. It may have been mistaken kindness, but his heart was all right."

Her keen sense of justice was aroused. She was sorry for her words.

"I'll forgive him if he will come back and say he is sorry for casting such reflections upon feminine fortitude." A trace of tears crept into her dark eyes. "Now let us have breakfast. I think I will go myself to the orchard before Ben comes today."

Wayland Stewart was disappointed at the turn of affairs. He did not fancy such abrupt disposal of the subject. He had thought for the moment that his daughter was deeply affected, and then she had brought the little episode to a close as a summarily as if it had been a chapter of a book, at the bottom of which was written "finis," but he pushed the subject no further. He always manifested the same deference to his daughter's wishes as he required from her.

The day passed slowly—very slowly for Pearl, though she managed to keep more busy than usual.

She even formulated some new plans for the school, a thing she had been trying to accomplish for some time. She congratulated herself upon her day's achievements. That night, though, she cried a little on her pillow—but only a little; she would prove to herself that she was brave. She looked up toward the glorious evening star shining through her window and tried to wonder just what it was, whether there were beings there like herself and whether they were always happy. Its influence soothed her and presently she slept.

They received a few lines from Phillip soon after his arrival at Chickamauga. He told them of his good fortune in getting the appointment of first assistant surgeon in the Hospital Corps of Volunteers. He was very busy, but promised to write again from Tampa.

Many hours were spent by father and daughter as they sat together under the evening sky, wondering what Phillip was doing or calculating how soon his regiment would be deported. But neither of them ever alluded to the possibility of Phillip never coming back. They seemed to avoid this topic by tacit consent; perhaps, because of the inherent superstition of the human heart,—that to anticipate misfortunes tends to hasten their approach.

The days that ran into weeks and the weeks that seemed likely to lengthen into months for the twenty-five thousand men impatiently sweltering under a tropical sun and waiting for the signal to

move were days and weeks of feverish anxiety in as many homes. Time and again, breaking hearts in those homes were called upon to go through the agony of that separation, bitterest and most absolute of all, when they caught a mind vision of loaded transports bearing out to sea their dearly loved. And still the agony was prolonged.

At last, however, a telegram came from Phillip. It was sent the evening of the day he sailed and conveyed the usual satisfaction of telegrams. It read:

"Embarked this morning. Exact destination unknown. Will write when possible.

PHILLIP."

The morning papers of June twenty-second gave to an eager people the news that the first American troops had landed on foreign soil, and the eyes of a breathless nation were turned upon a little, dirty, Cuban village hundreds of miles away.

Pearl slipped upstairs and opened the door of Phillip's room. Some few fancy articles that had been packed away in the trunk which he had sent from Leyton were on the dresser. He had told her to dispose of them as she chose. She had chosen to put them out. She wished she had not now. It gave her an uncanny, creeping feeling to see them there. She went over and looked at a cabinet photograph of Phillip. She had brought the picture from her own room from a pathetic notion that it seemed more as if Phillip himself were there. It

seemed to her now as though she were gazing on the features of the dead. The things that she had been so pleased to place about the room suddenly lost their potent charm. She shrank from touching them as one does a body when the soul has mysteriously, silently, gone from it forever. She turned with almost terrified haste to leave. But she closed the door softly as one would the door of a death chamber.

Perhaps other women that day and many a day afterward went up to vacant rooms, gazed hungrily on pictured features, then reverently and fearfully closed the door behind them.

After the news of the landing at Barquiri there was nothing to do but wait the shock of battle. When two days later it came the horror of it smote the American people as cruelly as the bullets and shrapnel did the brave fellows at Guasimas. Cold, trembling fingers grasped the sheets from daily press, and eager eyes swept down the fateful columns to find there life or death to hope.

Pearl breathed a prayer of thankfulness each time that Phillip's name was not among the doomed. She began to realize in these days how much he was to her, now that at any moment he might be lost to her forever. She knew his fearless adherence to duty and she gloried in it; but she dreaded the results, for bravery on the battlefield finds oftener its reward in bullets than in added shoulder straps.

And one night as she and her father were driving home through the still fragrant summer air, twelve thousand men were creeping, slipping along the narrow trail leading to El Paso—and Phillip was among the number.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE WOUNDED ROUGH RIDER.

WHEN warrior hearts are beating in wild ecstasy of desperate enterprise, when the air is still vibrant with cries of triumph, as the victorious standard is being planted deep in hostile ground; in those brief moments are experienced the ineffable thrills of patriotic joy. But in the next the light of transfiguration begins to fade, the white-robed spirit of victory vanishes and the sad trophies of the martial god lie scattered across her pathway.

Death levels all men. Upon the battle-field of San Juan lay the Indian,—his stern, swarthy features upturned to the pitiless sky—pierced through to the heart, stretched by his side, wearing his dignity even in death—a Captain of the Regulars; a little farther on by the stream that still rolled a crimson tide a lieutenant dying with three of his faithful black troopers fallen near him: the Indian, the white man and the black; officer and trooper, scholar and the rider of the plains lay side by side. So does a common cause make brothers of us all.

The sun was beginning its descent across the western sky. Back and forth along the trail, up and down the hill slopes, men with long, swinging,

unwearying strides were passing, bearing in their arms, across their shoulders or on litters the wounded to places of safety.

The ceaseless clatter of the land crabs and the ominous whirring sound of the foul-winged buzzards as they poised in the air, or sat, grim watchers of death, upon a roadside tree, struck a cold chill to the heart.

Groups of men sank their spades in the dark, rank earth and prepared the trenches destined as the last tenting ground of hundreds of the soldier boys.

The sun dropped at last, a blood-red ball, into a sea of flame behind the regal cloud-capped mountains. Phillip laid his fingers tenderly upon the half-closed lids of a dying soldier. There was a spasmodic heaving of the chest, and it was all over He was dark-skinned, but no more deference could have been shown to any than was displayed by the young surgeon toward his dark-hued brother. The black hand and the white were still clasped together as they had been when the pain-distorted lips had whispered.

"Surgeon, you've made it easy foa me to die. You've been kind. It's wuth the bullets to be treated like a white man. And—if you find the Lieutenant be shoa to tell him I started foa help but fell befoa I got there. Can you raise me a little, surgeon? I want to see the flags upon the crest. Bless the Lawd! the black man can fight at

last foa his country!" The soul broke the bars of its dusky prison and was free.

Phillip withdrew his hand from the relaxing fingers and turned to see aproaching him three Red Cross nurses and a dirty, tattered Cuban, bearing with them the form of a Rough Rider. One of the wounded man's hands hung limply over the bearer's arm. It showed the shapely fingers of the young aristocrat and he wore the insignia of official rank.

"We found him in the woods a couple of yards from the trail," said one of the men.

"Take him there to the station," ordered the surgeon. "I will see to him at once." He stooped down over the silent body at his feet, lifted a broken palm leaf from the ground and laid it gently over the dead man's face. Then he turned to administer to the living.

The brilliant after-glow of the vanished sun lighted up the whole landscape. It gave a momentary health gleam to the pallid face on the banks of the little stream. Phillip took a roll of lint from the hands of a surgeon at his side and went to his new patient. When he reached him a low exclamation broke from his lips.

"Do you know him?" asked a hospital steward who was aiding Phillip.

"Yes. He is an acquaintance of mine. He is Lieutenant Douglass." Then he began to bathe the

angry wound in the left breast and pressed a ball of lint into the gaping rent.

"He will hardly regain consciousness," he remarked, as he felt the wounded man's pulse.

"I wonder if he may be the Lieutenant to whom the black trooper yonder tried to bring aid," remarked the steward. "He said he left him in the woods a little back from the trail."

"Quite likely." Phillip's laconic answers forbade many inquiries. He ordered one of the nurses to keep watch of the patient and to call him if there should be any change. Others, struck down a few moments before in the rifle pits, were being carried in.

From the hills beyond came the sound of shot and shell, but where the wounded were lying quiet reigned. Only the musical note of a brush cuckoo calling at intervals to its mate or the plaintive coo of a dove was heard from the deep thickets near.

Some half-hour later the steward returned to Phillip and said in a low tone:

"I think, surgeon, if you would like to speak to the Lieutenant he might recognize you now. He seemed to be conscious a few minutes ago."

Phillip hesitated as he looked after the retreating steward, but the hesitation was only for a moment; then personal considerations sank before the one overpowering fact that a soul was slipping into eternity, unfriended and in an alien land; that he was dear to some far away who would cherish as their

only crumb of comfort a last message from his dying lips.

He crossed over and stood silently a moment beside the limp figure stretched before him. The gleam from the lantern in his hand fell wierdly across the pale features, the eyes were closed. Perhaps Phillip's intent gaze had power to summon back to this world the spirit slowly drifting beyond. There was a flutter of the eyelids for an instant then they were lifted wearily and the dying man looked up at the tall figure at his side. Phillip saw that the glance was one of reason. He knelt upon the ground and took one of the cold hands in his. A swift and instant look of recognition was flashed back.

"Do you know me, Douglass?" asked Phillip. There was a painful struggle with an overpowering weakness, a slight spasmodic tightening of the fingers, then—

"Vail! Where am I?"

"At the dressing station. You were carried here late this afternoon. You have lost much blood and must not make too great effort to speak."

But the admonition was unheeded. "Is the wound serious?"

"Yes, and you would without doubt have been killed but the ball was swerved from its mark by striking a trinket you wore."

"I have not much longer to live, then?"

Phillip shrank from answering. It is not easy

to tell a man he is dying when he puts the question; yet it was the duty of the moment.

"To all human appearances you have nearly run life's race," came the low answer. "Death may come at any moment or it may delay some hours—I cannot say."

Douglass lifted his head feebly and Phillip saw he was trying to pull the slender chain around to which was attached a small, thin silver case. Phillip had thrown it back over Douglass' shoulder while attending to the wound.

"Open it."

Phillip did so. The inside was lined with delicately ornamental sandal-wood. Between the lids were the crumbling, faded petals of a rose and written across one lid were the words: "Given by Margaret."

The hand that held the trinket trembled for an instant as much as did the dying one stretched to receive it. Neither spoke. Phillip's face wore an expression of mingled pain and sternness. He was back once more at brilliant Beechdale and he saw the careless, handsome libertine stealing away his spotless flower. Douglass, too, leaped the chasm of the past and was again by the side of the woman he had so madly and hopelessly loved. A look of ecstatic happiness lit up the dulled eyes for a moment. Then he tried to close the case.

The action brought Phillip to himself. He took

it and shut the lid as tenderly and as carefully as Douglass would have done.

"You do not—begrudge me—this?" Douglass asked.

There was something infinitely pathetic in the question—a man slipping into eternity asking one full of life and strength if he envied him the possession of a dead flower. Phillip was not ashamed of the tears that sprang into his eyes.

"Give me something to—keep life in a little longer!" implored the dying man.

"I want to tell you—" He was too weak to finish the sentence.

Phillip hastily poured some brandy from a flask and placed it to the blue lips. Then he wiped the death beads from his brow.

"Thank you!" he whispered.

"You should not try to talk," Phillip advised again.

The stimulant, however, had given a momentary renewal of strength.

"I must say now—what I—have to. Can you lift my head? There!" He looked intently at Phillip.

"I am not sorry to be here. I sought death—and death for once has been kind. They will reckon me no doubt—as one who—lost—his life in his country's cause! You perhaps may know better. I had not the courage—to live. I sought an honorable exit!"

Even when dying irony fell naturally from the lips

of this blasé man of the world. He motioned for another draught of brandy.

"I should have liked to die on the—hills, but—we can't have all the good things we desire."

A smile flitted over his face, like the fitful gleam from dying embers. "A wounded negro insisted upon starting up the trail to bring me help. I was—afraid he would succeed and dragged myself into the—bushes. I saw you pass by once. A fellow can never rely on a doctor. He cures as often as he kills. I did not know but—what you—might patch—me up."

A sudden spasm of pain distorted his features.

"Are you suffering?" asked Phillip.

"I'm all—right; just a—little twinge. This pain is nothing—nothing I have suffered deeply—far more—deeply!"

"Shall I take any message to your sister?" asked Phillip anxiously.

"Only—that I fell while—making the charge. She would—have been better pleased if I had reached the hill-top. I have upheld the Douglass honor, though! That is—most important!"

Then Phillip did battle with himself for an instant. The charge was a magnificent and determined one, but at the end the standard of honor was floating over the enemy's ramparts.

"Have you any message for—Margaret?"

A look of surprise, then incredulity, then admiration swept in swift succession over the white face.

Then firmly and without a trace of the emotion he had exhibited a little while before came the one word—"Nothing!"

Phillip took the poor nerveless hand in his.

"Douglass," he said, "I meant what I said. I swear it! Have you no message?"

"None! I believe—in you Vail and—honor you. I think I always have—in my heart. I've kept you too long away—. The rest need you. I want—to —sleep." He closed his eyes wearily and Phillip arose.

He was asleep when Phillip passed that way again but it was the deep sleep of exhaustion. On through the long, perilous night and through the next day Douglass lived. The strong, massive frame yielded reluctantly to death.

"He can't die till they play the music. That's what he's waitin' foa!" remarked a superstitious negro, who had watched by his side at intervals through the day.

When the sun was once more crimsoning the West, just as the exultant sound of the Star Spangled Banner burst forth, Douglass opened his eyes. There was the far-seeing look of death in them, and the rapturous notes of American song drifted to him as it were from the unseen land. Phillip was by his side, but the eyes raised toward his saw nothing of this world.

The firing away on the hills ceased. Over all a reverent silence as by magic fell. Men stood bare-

headed with the last gleams of the vanishing sun resting in benediction upon them. It was the Angelus of the battle-field!

Suddenly the dying man with a supreme effort of strength raised himself on his elbow. A look of frantic determination came upon his face and into his sightless eyes. "I must—get—farther back—before—they—come!" he said wildly.

Phillip pressed him gently back. A bright red stream gushed from between the set lips. It fell upon Phillip's hand. There was a gasp—then another and—the end.

The last throbbing notes of the anthem went floating across to the men standing silent in their rifle-pits. It swept on mockingly to the conquered host in the valley below and broke against the everlasting hills.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

WAITING.

IT was the bitter with the sweet that was sent across the sea after the battle of San Juan. A great victory was won but many of America's sons were left sleeping in an alien land and in graves never to be consecrated by a mother's tears. A swift and mighty shout of joy rent the heavens, yet with it came the cry of Rachel weeping for her children and would not be comforted.

Pearl went often to the village post-office during those days of anxiety but no letter rewarded her. She and her father still scanned eagerly the official lists of the killed and wounded. Lieutenant Douglass, of Company E., Rough Riders, was noted one day among the dead and Pearl was conscious of a wave of pity sweeping over her as she read it—pity for a wasted life. Even in the first surprise and indignation at the revelation of this man's character she had never lost sight of the fact, that he had shown to her, in their brief accquaintance, his nobler nature—the nature not entirely obliterated though in such pitiable subjection to his baser self.

With the uncomfortably vivid imagination of a woman, Pearl attributed Phillip's silence to all sorts

of evils, possible and impossible, and flung from her almost impatiently the more reasonable one of imperfect mail service. She tried to reconcile herself to the thought that he was dead and the result was not unfavorable to Phillip's cause. It is the very mockery of fate that affords us the sweetest and truest visions of our dear ones when they have vanished from our sight forever. Now that it seemed probable to her languishing hopes that Phillip was lost to her, she no longer refused to examine her heart to see if hidden in any corner the little love god, unknown to herself had been for this long time sheltered; and under Cupid's magic spell she beheld Phillip as she had never yet beheld him. He was one, not only true, noble and unselfish, but one, who had at last by his very gentleness conquered her restless heart. She felt that all her deepest longings, her highest aspirations had been understood by him. Through him alone might life's symphony have been complete. The awakening was perilous to her peace of mind. If possible, she knew that she must soothe her soul to sleep once more.

The harvest time was close at hand now and the pleasant evenings at the "school" were at an end. At their last meeting six more young people stepped out with her from school-room than had entered it three months before, and there was no wild boisterousness, no rude jokes when she walked, sweet and dignified among these sturdy youths of the country

side. Somehow without talking it she had unconsciously instilled into them the desire to be not unworthy of her esteem and even of her admiration and she recognized the change. And the people of Cloverdale had even in this short time begun to realize that a good teacher was better than a cheap one so when Wayland Stewart headed a subscription list for procuring a first-class instructor the coming school year (which was to last at least eight months) he found it no very difficult task to get those who were willing to follow his example. Pearl could certainly lay down her work with a feeling of supreme satisfaction. Her cup of happiness had been full to overflowing, could she have felt that Phillip might rejoice with her.

Late one afternoon toward the end of August, Wayland Stewart entered the library where Pearl sat sewing. She had heard him coming up the gravel-path and across the porch with a step quicker than usual. Bad news is seldom interpreted with springing steps and her heart bounded with hope. When he entered the room with a letter in his hand held toward her, she felt that she had seen and known all about it from the moment she first heard his approaching footsteps.

"From Phillip?" she asked eagerly.

"You don't deserve it, such a bird of ill-omen," he answered teasingly.

But she had no time to retort. She sprang toward him and took the letter from his hand.

"Well, father, not opened yet!"

"I have not been to the village. I was just coming home from Mr. Wilder's and met John at the gate. He gave me the letter, so you see I have not had much time."

"No"—(a little doubtfully) "but if it had been mine I think I should have torn it open as I walked up."

"O, but that's a woman's way," he answered. "They are always curious." She laughed and spread the letter before her.

It was written on the second night after the battle of San Juan. Phillip said little about himself except that he was well and very busy. "This experience," he wrote, "will be worth as much to me as a year of hospital service at home. Many are down with fever and must be cared for in addition to the wounded." He concluded by expressing his confidence that the war would soon be over and begged a letter from both his uncle and cousin with all the news from home.

What white-winged messengers of joy and hope such silent missives often are! In a moment, the world for Pearl was full of sunlight. Phillip was alive and well six weeks before. That fact was all-sufficient now. News six weeks old under some circumstances would have been of little value, but when it had brought the dead to life, hope could span the intervening time.

"Well, I hope the war really will be at an end

shortly and it looks as though it might be now," commented her father.

"O, do you really think so?" she exclaimed joyously, and a few moments later she wondered whether the volunteers in that case would not soon return.

"I should think so," replied her father. "I would not be surprised, however, to hear that Phillip had become so enamoured with the Pearl of the Antilles that he would seek service there. He gives a glowing description of it."

"Father, you are guilty of trying to perpetrate a joke!"

"Well, I believe I was successful, was I not?" He looked narrowly at her glowing face. "Putting all jokes aside, however," he continued, "I think it might be a fine thing for Phillip."

"Yes, if he could keep well himself," she answered, uneasiness reflected in her tones.

"Such a girl! The danger signal out again. Where has my daughter's eternal hopefulness gone?" He glanced at the clock. " I must see John about those Bartletts, Pearl. I will be back soon. You can read your letter over to pass the time."

She did and a second perusal seemed to be a difficult task, at least the time consumed would warrant such conclusion. After she had finished she sat quite still, weaving pretty fairy scenes out of her own fertile fancy with Phillip as the valiant Prince and some one very like herself as the enchanted

maiden. But by and by there came the evil spirit in the vale of loveliness—peace-breaking premonition weaving its ill-omened spells. What indeed if Phillip, feeling there was nothing to come home for, should, as her father hinted, still remain away or, what if passing safe through all the dangers of the battle-field he should at last succumb to fever or to overwork! The very thought of it made her wild. Her fairy visions vanished and she walked nervously toward the window. She remembered then he had begged for a letter. If it took as long for one to reach him as it did for them to get his the sooner it was written the better, she decided.

She went to her desk and got out her materials. The very action seemed to bring him nearer, and who could tell but that it did? She wrote steadily and swiftly for some time, then the busy pen paused in its rapid flight across the page. A half smile played about her lips, just the shadow of perplexity rested on her brow. Once or twice the difficulty, whatever it was, seemed about to be solved and the pen again touched the paper, but only to be again removed. At last, however, her thoughts began to flow without interruption. The puckers in the brow vanished and the smile broadened on her lips as she re-read the paragraph just written.

"Father misses you, Phillip, for you see I cannot talk politics as well as you, though he is too polite, of course, to tell me so. Perhaps he thinks he will have to submit to the inevitable for he said—what

do you think he said, Phillip?—that he would not be surprised should you become so enamoured of the Pearl of the Antilles, as to remain with her. Surely you would not be so unfaithful! Phillip, the Pearl of Cloverdale wants you very, *very* much. Will you come?"

The clock on the mantel struck and reminded her that her father had been gone almost an hour. She had thought from what he said he would be back very shortly. It was surprising, though, how quickly the moments had flown. With lighter heart than when she had sat down at her desk she arose and went out to wait for him.

A little later when the two re-entered the room her father saw on her desk the letter directed to Phillip.

"Written to Phillip?" he asked quite as though it were a question of only indifferent interest to him.

"Yes, I had nothing to do. I thought we should send one as soon as possible since it might be long in reaching him."

"Phillip will appreciate the thoughtfulness, I am sure," he remarked.

She was looking intently at a magazine on the table and Wayland Stewart was scanning keenly his daughter's face. He must have seen something there that pleased him for he smiled. Perhaps he thought Phillip also would be interested in his discovery for, after the two had a few hours later parted for the night, another letter was directed to

Assistant-Surgeon Phillip Vail. This was, however, hidden away in Wayland Stewart's coat pocket and though he was a man and subject to the failings of his sex there was not much fear that he would forget to mail it.

CHAPTER XLIX

PHILLIP WINS.

THE twelfth day of August, eighteen hundred and ninety-nine, will remain long in the memories of those who had boys "at the front." The news that peace had come was met with one united pæan of joy; the jubilant notes swept across the deep, blue sea and broke upon the shores of the land of unwalled cities.

The days of harvest passed and their treasures of gold and purple and scarlet were gathered in autumn with her sunset tints, flung here and there her gorgeous coloring. Hill and valley burned beneath her touch and woodland streams blushed as she glanced into their crystal depths. A tender, sweet expectancy trembled in the air.

The latch string of many a door hung loose. Many an ear was strained to hear the first glad echo of returning steps and in many a home gleaming white against the burnished hills sat eager watchers for a boy in blue.

The next letter received from Phillip had evidently crossed Pearl's answer, for he made no allusion to it. She was sorely disappointed, but tried to obtain consolation from the hope that her letter would

bring him to her side when duty allowed. So the Clovers also had its waiting hearts.

September purpled into October. The woods were vocal with the farewell carols of their tiny songsters, winging their southward way. The rich brown nuts snapped their chains in twain to hide away among the russet leaves and listen to their low, soft, crooning lullabies.

There is something infinitely sad, tenderly suggestive of the past in the ripe beauty of the autumn. Pearl, as she thrilled to its rich music, went back in memory to other autumns when she and Phillip had wandered through the flaming woods or watched the shifting glories of a setting sun. She was lingering over those happy, careless hours where for the first time she had learned of Phillip's love. How long ago it seemed—how very long ago! She wondered when it was that Phillip had first learned how much she was to him. She tried to fathom, too, that other mystery as great—when her own heart had felt the first, faint stirrings of the tender, sweet emotion that now possessed her soul. So she sat and dreamed.

An artist beholding her, might have fancied that he too had caught the vision which inspired the peerless Raphael to paint the Holy Mother and would have stood entranced and reverent, a lover, stealing thence would have felt that all youth's rosy dreams need now be dreams no longer, but fulfill-

ments and would have clasped her in his arms. And Love first found her.

Coming quickly, softly across the lawn was one, whose tall, straight figure suited well his soldier garb. Within a few yards of the rustic bench on which she sat, the stranger paused. The girl neither saw nor heard him. He moved still closer.

"Pearl!"

Deep, tender, vibrant was the utterance of her name. She knew the voice before she turned to see its owner. As tender and as vibrant came the answer:

"Phillip!" But she sat quite still.

In old days, she would have started impetuously from her seat, would have clasped her arms about his neck, pelted him with countless questions, reproached him for his long delay. He hardly knew this sweet and serious woman who had flung her heart to him in that one simple word. There was something of the glad restfulness in the cry which the waiting bird sends forth to greet its long delaying but returning mate. And Phillip heard and she was gathered to his heart. Her proud head fell low upon his breast, his bronzed face touched her soft dark hair. The coldly gracious words that she had planned to say, the wooing she had meant to have had fled before Love's arbitrary will.

If Phillip had doubted often on his homeward way, his interpretation of her summons, had questioned, too, his uncle's sanguine hopes, he read now

assurance in her eyes and voice. Love needs no words to make its meaning plain; a look, a touch, a cry is pregnant with a world of thought. But how this joy had come to him he could not comprehend.

"I cannot understand!" he whispered.

She raised her head and smiled into his perplexed face.

"Understand—what?"

"That you should love me. I have loved so long without dreaming it could ever be." He said it almost sadly for the shadows of the past still hid the full, sweet day-break of his happiness. A sudden sense that there might be a lack of womanly dignity in her attitude toward him rushed upon her.

"You never seemed to care to understand. Why should you take it so for granted that—that things are different with us now?"

"You did not mean it after all?" She did not see the half-amused expression on his face.

"Mean what?"

"Why, that you love me."

"I did not say so," she answered desperately.

"Try it now!" he pleaded.

"Don't you understand a woman does not like to have a man take for granted that she loves him? He should ask the question quite as if he did not know."

"No, I didn't know," he replied humbly. "I haven't had much practise. I am sorry that I—"

He didn't finish his apology. Pride fell and Love rushed in and took the citadel. She lifted up her arms and drew his face to hers. A whisper soft as zephyr-breath fell on his ear:

"I love you!"

And there was a new heaven and a new earth, for the former things had passed away.

"My Margaret!" he said some half hour later when reason had returned. She started painfully at the name.

"Have you no regrets for the past?" he asked earnestly.

She understood. "None! None, my Phillip!"

Then as they walked toward the house he began to tell her of Douglass' last hours.

"Phillip," she said, when he had ended, "if women would demand from men more than riches, lineage, fame, how different many homes might become!"

As they entered the house, its emptiness suddenly reminded her of what had strangely been forgotten.

"I wonder why father has not come! He is never so late without having told me of his intention beforehand." There was real alarm in her voice.

Phillip laid a reassuring hand upon her arm and drew her down beside him.

"There is no need for anxiety. I saw him before I saw you. I paid my respects and then asked in well-regulated form though, perhaps, a little abruptly, if I might plead my cause with you. He gave me God-speed on my errand, and added it might be

some time before he came back since he knew you were in good hands."

When they had settled back once more Phillip asked: "Have you thought, Pearl, that in marrying me you marry a poor, country doctor?"

"Phillip, you dear, dear fellow! Indeed, I have been so foolishly happy that I have not given a thought to the more serious future, but you have lifted a burden from my shoulders before I was allowed to feel it. If you had concluded to practise in the city, I should have had a grave question to settle. Father is getting too old to leave the farm. It is his life you know; yet how could I ever have left him alone? But Phillip, love, are you sure you will be contented, with your talent and greater prospects, to settle here?"

"Quite happy and contented, darling. The people of Cloverdale are yours and mine. I have grown to love them and I want to help them. You have taught me to look with reverence upon these rolling hills and deep, calm valleys. I believe God speaks here to me. I want to help you. We are but two among many, but consecrated lives can remove mountains of difficulty. We and our neighbors shall make of this spot the ideal country side, shall we not, my Pearl?"

"Yes!" and then she added reflectively: "Phillip, it is not after all how far we reach above men's heads that brings us to the stars; it is how high we lift our fellow men."

"My Pearl, of priceless worth, lost once but found and now, thank God, my own forever!" He breathed reverently, as if the jewel were almost too sacred for him to wear.

A little after, Wayland Stewart, stepping softly toward the door, found them, hand in hand, the mellow light of the shaded lamp falling softly on their faces. It was a long, long time now since he and the mother of the girl yonder had sat just so, with the same sweet story written on their faces. A sudden pain pressed the lines more deeply in his forehead, for true joy is ever bitter-sweet.

He sighed, then walked to where they sat, a smile of benediction in his eyes.

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